

David Austin, 90, Noroton Yacht Club Member, Architect Who Founded His Firm, Played Violin,

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David Etnier Austin, 90, architect and founding partner of [Austin Patterson Disston](#) of South Norwalk, died on Feb. 18 from complications of Alzheimer's.

A modernist whose work included private residences and community spaces throughout the Northeast, Austin's designs were thoughtful, innovative, and elegant.

Born in Hartford to Helen Goodwin and A. Everett "Chick" Austin on Jan. 19, 1933, he and his sister, Sally, grew up in a household that offered a unique cultural education. His mother and his father, the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum, lived at the center of an exciting artistic world frequented by luminaries such as

Alexander Calder, Betty Davis, Gertrude Stein, and Igor Stravinsky.

Mr. Austin was educated at the Kingswood School, Harvard College (B.S.) and the Harvard Graduate School of Design (M. Arch.), where he developed his passion for modern architecture. He began his career with Philip Johnson in New York before opening up his own practice in Connecticut.

Mr. Austin had a vivid imagination, boundless energy, and a zest for life. As a child, he spent countless hours drawing and building models of boats, trains, and airplanes. As a teenager, he began building boats and helped design the prototype for the Castine Class sailboat, which remains an active racing fleet today.

While still in college, he crossed the Atlantic Ocean on a 38-foot sailboat using only a sextant and a compass for navigation. As an adult, he enjoyed cruising and racing on the northeast coast and competed in several Bermuda races.

Classical music was a lifelong passion. He was a dedicated violinist, practicing daily in his later years when he had more time. He especially enjoyed chamber music and had a coterie of musician friends with whom he played regularly.

Austin sustained a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world throughout his life. Having majored in physics at Harvard, he followed discoveries in quantum physics with great interest. He particularly welcomed conversations about ideas in science, music, and architecture. He loved to travel and would immerse himself in the history, language, and cuisine of whatever place he visited, especially during regular trips to France and Italy.

A devoted husband and father, Austin and his first wife, the late Mollie Munro, had two children, Donald and Laura, who survive him. Mr. Austin also leaves behind his beloved wife and partner, Sandy Falconer, and her three children, Ian, Tonia and Tory, as well as 11 grandchildren.

He enjoyed his association with the Century Club, the New York Yacht Club, the Noroton Yacht Club, Pequot Yacht Club, and the Castine Yacht Club, where he served as Commodore in the 1960's. He was a founder of the Bridgeport Architecture Conservancy and longtime member of the American Association of Architects.

A celebration of his life will take place at 3 p.m., Saturday, April 8, at the Noroton Yacht Club, and at a date to be determined at the Castine Yacht Club in August. A contribution in Austin's memory can be made to the [Maine Coast Heritage Trust](#).

— [an obituary](#) from *Lawrence Funeral Home*, where online condolences may be left