Robert Crane, 96, Airline Pilot, with Noroton Yacht Club at Its 1928 Founding

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Date : December 5, 2016

Robert Birney Crane of Darien crossed the bar on Wednesday Nov. 30.

Born to Albert Eli Crane and Florence Luray Overton Crane on Feb. 8, 1920 in Plainfield, N.J., Bob thoroughly enjoyed life for over 96 years.

He moved to Darien with his family at the age of 8. Bob attended Miss Thomas's School and Saint Luke's Academy before graduating from the Darien High School in 1936. Following his graduation Bob attended

Middlebury College and New York University graduating with a bachelor's degree in engineering in 1942.

After college Bob turned one of his passions into a career as an airline pilot with Pan American World Airways. Bob remained with Pan Am until his retirement in 1980 except for a period during World War II when Pan American became part of the Army's Air Transport Command.

Supporting the war effort Bob would make up to five round trips a week to India, departing from Miami with stops in Puerto Rico, British Guiana, two stops in Brazil, Ascension Island, Gold Coast of Africa, Nigeria, Central Africa, Africa-Egyptian Sudan, and Arabia.

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— This obituary *is from the Edward Lawrence Funeral Home.*

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Bob was a senior captain and check pilot for Pan Am and as such was often called upon to transport dignitaries and celebrities such as President Sukarno of Indonesia, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi the Shah of Iran, the Rolling Stones, the Beatles and many others. He was also called upon for the evacuation of Saigon at the end of the Viet Nam conflict where he made multiple flights from Saigon to Guam with planeloads of evacuees.

On Nov. 23, 1945 Bob married the love of his life and best friend Mary Patricia Ann Fairbrother, (Pat), in Miami.

Bob was a fiercely competitive sailor his entire life, and loved nothing more than being out on the water with Pat, his friends and family. He was one of the founders of the Middlebury College Sailing Team, a founding member of the Coconut Grove Sailing Club of Miami, FL, a lifetime member of the International Lightning Class Association and a member of the Noroton Yacht Club of Darien since its founding in 1928.

Bob was part of the fabric at Noroton Yacht Club starting as its only sailing instructor, swimming instructor and tennis coach in 1936 to his role as commodore in the early 1960s. He couldn't say no when it involved sailing, kids or water.

An athlete, he was competitive at all sports whether it was playing hockey at Middlebury or shinny on the ponds around his home. Bob and his friends played golf, skied, bowled, swung tennis rackets with abandon, swam and played ping-pong at any and every opportunity. His happiest times were always out on the water with Pat on their sloop "Hooligan."

Upon his retirement Bob became active in many local activities including Person to Person, Darien RTM, the Senior Men's Association and the SOB's.

Bob is survived by his wife of 70 years, a daughter, two sons, eight grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Bob's two sons, James and William, both live in Darien. His daughter, Linda, lives in Marblehead, Mass. He was predeceased by a brother and a sister.

A celebration of his life will be announced in 2017. In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the new Noroton Yacht Club junior room.