

Half Staff – Merrill F. McLane

September 14, 2008



ROCKPORT — Merrill F. McLane, 91, a retired Central Intelligence Officer who served overseas and in Washington, died peacefully in his boyhood home in Rockport, on Sunday, Sept. 14, 2008 surrounded by his family. Mr. McLane, who lived in Bethesda, Md., was born in Rockport and graduated from Rockport High School in 1934. McLane was a descendant of Richard Tarr, first settler of Sandy Bay (Rockport).

McLane was an enlisted man in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1934 to 1938. In World War II as a Marine rifle platoon leader in the operation to retake Guam from the Japanese he was awarded the Bronze Star. He retired as colonel in the Marine Corps Reserves.

He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1942 and was active in alumni affairs. In 1976, he received a master's degree in cultural anthropology from American University and went among the Gypsies in Spain. This resulted in three books, the first of which was *Proud Outcasts, the Gypsies of Spain*. He also attended the Naval War College in 1956-57.

A mountaineer, he was co-author of a climbing guide to the Grand Tetons, and took part in the rescue of a parachutist on top of Devil's Tower, Wyo. in 1941. He played ice hockey until he was 78, and continued to skate with his grandchildren.

In Rockport he was a founder of the Rights-of-Way to the sea Committee, designated by the State of Massachusetts as a model for its other coastal communities to follow to protect access along the ocean front. His writings on Rockport include: *The Adventure of Blueberrying on Cape Ann, Massachusetts*, *Place Names of Old Sandy Bay* and *A New England Town at Dartmouth College, Rockport, Massachusetts*.

He was a former member of the Alpine Club and a 50-year member of the Thoreau Society. A long-time Unitarian, he supported the opening of its first church in Honolulu. He was a member of the Universalist Church in Rockport.

Survivors include his wife, Helene, a native of Louvain, Belgium, his daughter Karen McLane of Kensington, Md. and his step daughter Natalia DeWitt of Bethesda, and four grandchildren. He was predeceased by his son, Bruce Merrill McLane, in 2005.

ARRANGEMENTS: A service to celebrate his life will be held at the First Universalist Church of Rockport on Wednesday, Sept. 17 at 1 p.m. Funeral arrangements are being conducted by the Burgess & Mackey Funeral Home, 201 Main St., Rockport.