

LAWRENCE C. PEABODY, 78, WAS INTERIOR DESIGNER, BUSINESSMAN

Joshua Hudelson, Globe Correspondent

23 August 2002

The Boston Globe

Lawrence C. Peabody, an interior designer who favored aesthetics over practicality, died Monday of a cerebral hemorrhage at Massachusetts General Hospital. He was 78.

"I really think his mission in life was to beautify everything," said his daughter, citing the numerous works he designed in response to what he felt was kitsch and ugliness in furniture catalogs.

In 1955, Mr. Peabody started Lawrence Peabody and Associates, a design firm in Boston. Mr. Peabody's clients included Sears, Roebuck & Co., Kohler, Regal Rugs, Boyd Lighting, Chapman Lamps, and Richardson Brothers. He also helped design numerous hotels in the United States and Caribbean, including the Carriage House in Kohler, Wis.; Malliouhana Hotel in Anguilla, British West Indies; and Fager Island in Ocean City, Md., said his son, Thomas L. C. Peabody of Anguilla.

During a trip to Haiti, Mr. Peabody became friends with DeWitt Peters, the founder of Haiti's Le Centre d'Art. Together they helped promote interest in primitive Haitian art by corresponding with museums overseas.

A "flaming extrovert," as his daughter described him, Mr. Peabody was rarely reserved with his opinions.

"He didn't have a diplomatic bone in his body," she said. "Not when it came to interiors and art."

Even his decision to serve in World War II was made in the name of art: "He chose the Navy because he liked the uniforms," his daughter said. "He loved those bellbottom trousers."

Mr. Peabody was chief petty officer of USS Duffy, a destroyer escort in the Pacific. His keen eyesight earned him the nickname "Eagle Eye."

Mr. Peabody was born and reared in Haverhill. Even as a child, he frequented antique stores.

He studied interior architecture at Rhode Island School of Design, graduating with a bachelor of arts degree in 1950. He went on to study at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen.

While there, he fell in love with Bette Taarland of Norway, a professor at the school. They wed in 1952.

Besides his daughter and son, Mr. Peabody leaves a sister, Claudia Houston of Haverhill; five grandchildren; and a great- grandchild.

A funeral service will be held tomorrow at 11 a.m. in St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Brattleboro.