

Steven Milbank Foote

Steven Milbank Foote died peacefully on August 15, 2026. He was 86.

Born in New York City on June 25, 1940, Steven graduated from Phillips Academy and Brown University before serving in the United States Air Force. He went on to earn a Master's of Architecture and a Master's of Science in Urban Design from Columbia University, where he graduated at the top of his class.

Design was Steven's lifelong love, and it surfaced in everything he touched — not only in his professional portfolio, but in the many family homes he shaped over the years, and in the quick, confident sketches he'd dash off on a napkin for anyone lucky enough to be sitting across from him at dinner. He liked to say, with a wink, that "people should be given what they ought to enjoy, lest standards fall" — a line that captured both his generosity and his exacting eye.

Steven spent his career at Perry Dean Rogers and Partners, an architectural firm in Boston, where he shaped the design of college student centers and libraries. He forged career-long relationships with his clients and relished mentoring young colleagues, delivering his gentle version of "no" — a soft-spoken but unmistakable "that's not going to work." He never met a corner he didn't want to wrap in windows, and his love of natural light and color became a signature of his work. In 1995, in recognition of his achievement and lifetime contribution to the profession, he was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, the highest honor awarded by the Institute.

Outside the office, Steven came alive on the water and on the slopes. He raced his sailboat *Allegro* in the Small Point, Maine races for years, later serving as Commodore. In the winter, he skied, a passion he discovered as a teenager riding the bus up to Bromley Mountain in Vermont. As a parent, he roused his young children in the predawn hours, trundled them off in the car, and devoted the day to teaching them the sport on that same mountain. This passion accompanied him into his later years, when he could be seen carving down the slopes alongside his grandchildren. After skiing, they enjoyed the fireplace at Johnny Seesaw's, an inn that proudly displayed a plaque designating it as the "Foote Family Ski House for 50 Years."

Music ran through Steven's life from the beginning. He performed in coffee shops during his college years and carried that love of singing forward as a member of the choir at St. Paul's church, in the Christmas Revels, in the Boston Pops Holiday Chorus, and with the Saengerfest Men's Chorus. He also expressed deep pleasure in cooking and in bringing the family together for intricately prepared meals, which he referred to as "just a design project." Steven was a believer in and a creator of family rituals, the kind that bestowed shape and meaning on each gathering, year after year.

Fatherhood brought Steven joy and pride. He played his acoustic guitar and sang to his children at night. He created doorways to secret reading spots and fanciful key houses for them. Graduations

sent him to the hardware store for the cotton tarp, boards, and spray paint needed for his infamous banners. He offered advice, often in story form, never letting incidental facts get in the way of a good yarn. Steven kept himself elegant by nature and made a sport of tidying, but he reveled in a big family mess of laughter and games as much as a well-composed room.

Later in life, Steven threw himself into new pursuits with the same panache: cycling and fundraising for Dana Farber alongside his daughter in the Pan-Mass Challenge, exhibiting his work as a watercolorist in juried art shows, and cruising the rivers of Europe with his beloved wife, Josie.

Those who knew him will remember a man who moved through the world with grace, dreamed up ideas endlessly, and wore his many accomplishments lightly — but who also carried a mischievous streak, a gentleman with just a touch of rascal in him. Steven was more than the sum of his considerable interests and accomplishments. He paid close attention — to people, to light, to the small details that make a place feel like home — and one of his greatest gifts was his understanding of how people wanted to live, and his ability to create homes that served as both refuge and inspiration for the lives they hoped to build.

Steven is survived by his beloved wife, Josie, and her children, Andy and Tracy Gordon; his devoted daughters, Alison Reif, her children, Tyler and Connor and their father Tim Reif; Caroline Betcher, her husband, Bill, and their children, Grace and Teddy; and Rachel Klauber-Speiden, her husband, Josh Empson, and their children, Lucinda and Becket Empson-Speiden; stepchildren Blake Klauber and Adam Klauber along with their families; his sisters, Sally Hubby and Betsy Pope, and their families; along with a host of other extended and beloved relatives.

Services for Steven will be held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 59 Court Street, Dedham, MA, at 11 am on September 12, 2026, with a reception to follow at the church parish hall.

Steven's artwork can be viewed at www.stevenmfoote.com.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in his name to the Boston City Singers or Doctors Without Borders.