



William J. Magavern, II

July 29, 1934 - April 15, 2025

A Celebration of Life Service for William J. Magavern will be held on Friday, July 11, 2025, at 11:00 am at the Westminster Presbyterian Church 724 Delaware Avenue and all are invited to a reception following the service at the Garrett Club 91 Cleveland 91 Cleveland Avenue Buffalo New York 14222.

William J. Magavern II, Attorney, Civic Leader, Catalyst for New Burchfield Penney Art Center

July 29, 1934 – April 15, 2025

While serving on the board of the Buffalo State College Foundation in 1998, Bill Magavern had an inspiration: the Burchfield Penney Art Center should have a new building, and he would make the lead gift to catalyze it. Magavern went on to play a leading role in raising the funds and creating the design for the new museum. This was one of many contributions he made to Buffalo over a long career in law and business.

After graduating from Dartmouth College in 1956 and serving in the U.S. Army, Magavern returned to attend the University at Buffalo and joined his father, Samuel D. Magavern, in the practice of law at the firm now known as Magavern, Magavern, & Grimm, where he specialized in corporate law, real estate law, and trusts and estates.

As a young man living in the Allentown neighborhood, Magavern began buying and fixing up historic buildings, preserving them from neglect and

demolition, and was instrumental in founding the Allentown Association. Among other efforts, he and several colleagues renovated 14 abandoned buildings on Johnson Park, sparking the revitalization of the neighborhood. Magavern dedicated long hours to civic service, serving on many non-profit and government boards and commissions, including the International Institute, Planned Parenthood, Burchfield Penney Art Center, Upstate New York Transplant Services (ConnectLife), Buffalo Council on World Affairs, Erie County Mental Health Association, Buffalo Arts Commission, Erie County Cultural Advisory Board, and over thirty years with the Albright Knox Art Gallery; all leading to recognition as “Mr. Buffalo” in 2001. He also served on the boards of numerous companies, including Mentholatum, Niagara Blower, Metal Cladding, and Kissing Bridge.

When not working or volunteering, he enjoyed skiing, tennis, running, canoe and sailing trips, and renovating classic cars, some of which can now be seen at the Buffalo Transportation Pierce-Arrow Museum. (He bought his first car, a 1929 Ford Model A, for \$25 when he was 14 years old). He loved spending time at his summer home in Clarksburg, once owned by his grandfather, Dr. James Lewis. Loyal and devoted to his clients, friends, and family, he had an infectious sense of humor, a strong daredevil streak, a deep appreciation for visual art and natural beauty, and a thorough enjoyment of long walks, Friday fish fries, and country music.

He was predeceased by his second wife, Louise Morris Magavern, and his third wife, Linda Robertson Magavern. Both suffered from long illnesses, during which he took exceptional care of them. He was also predeceased by his beloved brother-in-law, Gordon “Skip” Hargraves, and by his older brother, James Magavern, his close partner in law, tennis, canoeing, and life; and his sister-in-law Robin Simon Magavern.

He is survived by three daughters from his marriage to Susan Clark: Mary Magavern, Dr. Lydia Shrestha, and Polly Wolfe (Daniel); also by two stepchildren, Laird Robertson (Elena) and Megan Robertson (Shawn); grandchildren; William Wolfe, Eva Wolfe, Maya Shrestha, Sammy Shrestha,

Elizabeth Sachsse, Eva Sachsse and Clare Sachsse and four step-grandchildren; and three sisters, Margaret Hargraves, Mary Worrell (Rick) and Jane Beebe (Spencer).

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Burchfield Penney Art Center for arts education, Planned Parenthood, or the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project. The Magavern family has entrusted the Kevin M. Mason funeral home (www.kevinmasonfuneralhome.com) to care for Bill and his family.

Family and friends are invited to share a favorite memory of Bill, sign the Online guest book and light a tribute candle at www.kevinmasonfuneralhome.com.

If you would like to make a donation to Burchfield Penney Art Center their address is 1300 Elmwood Avenue Buffalo NY 14222. if you would like to make a donation to Planned Parenthood you may do so online at www.plannedparenthood.org/donate. If you would like to make a donation to the Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project their address is 438 Main Street 7th floor, Buffalo NY 14202. On the memo portion of your check please write "William J. Magavern, II.

Once the Celebration of Life has been scheduled, we will provide the information on this website, or you may call the Kevin M. Mason Funeral Home at (716) 362-0199.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUL 11. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (Est)

Westminster Presbyterian Church
724 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo , NY 14209

Please assemble directly at Westminster Presbyterian Church 724 Delaware Avenue Buffalo NY 14209 on Friday, July 11, 2025, where the Celebration of Life will take place at 11:00 am. There will be a reception immediately following at the Garrett Club 91 Cleveland Avenue Buffalo New York 14222. All are cordially invited.

Tribute Wall

HC

“ Heidi Culbertson purchased the Simply Elegant S pathiphyllum for the family of William J. Magavern, II.



Heidi Culbertson - July 08, 2025 at 01:38 PM

SN

“ I met Mr. Magavern in the late 80's. I was just starting out a small sub 6 Corp in Buffalo. For some reason, he saw something in me, and really took the time to explain the workings of a corporation. He also helped me in some private law matters as well. His firm also stepped up and aided with selling my first home. Mr. Grimm (Rich) caught something in the first prospective buyers contract that lead to getting something extra. He was always kind, and patient. I am passing condolences out to his family. I am sure they already know, but he was a wonderful person. Thank you for sharing him with us. RIP Mr. Magavern, and thank you for your help.

s naples - July 08, 2025 at 01:09 PM

SM

“ Sarah M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of William J. Magavern, II.

Sarah M. - July 01, 2025 at 02:30 PM

SA

“ Over the last two weeks, I have thought a lot. Each and every Magavern should be damn proud to be one. To my Dad and Bill thank you! I have had the delight of each of you being my heroes. Bill, your mentorship and friendship will last my lifetime. Times like this are difficult, but I got to spend time with Polly (“Clarksburg girl”) and Mary. Lydia may you and your entire gang know that he lived up to his name - Mr. Buffalo!!!!

Sarah Magavern and Julian Ambrus - April 25, 2025 at 02:39 PM

MA

“ Bill was a true gentleman — he set the standard for class and style. When I moved to Buffalo from Rochester and joined the Buffalo T&S Club, Bill went out of his way to make me feel welcome and comfortable. I had the privilege of being Bill’s doubles partner in many lunchtime squash matches against Bim Bowen and Greg Pauly. Of course, being the sportsmen we were, we let those guys think they were really good.

Mark Alvut - April 20, 2025 at 09:19 PM

RR

“ Bill and I had lots of fun skiing together at Kissing Bridge. He was a very good skier and challenging to stay up with. He was a real gentleman and will certainly be missed by all who knew him. Dick Roach

Richard Roach - April 20, 2025 at 06:03 PM

MH

“ *Mary, Lydia and Polly, and Family,
Please accept our sincere sympathies on the passing of your dear Dad. We met the three girls having dinner at “The Place” several months ago and when your Dad was in the hospital. Know our thoughts and prayers are with you at this difficult time.
Fondly,
Melvyn and Judy Hurwitz*

melvyn and judy hurwitz - April 20, 2025 at 04:46 PM

MW

“ *Dear Mary, Lydia and Polly: I am so sorry for your loss. He was a great gentleman. He will always be in your heart. Love, Molly*

Molly Wadsworth - April 20, 2025 at 04:13 PM

EB

“ *So very sad- Bill was always like a big brother to me.. Through the years I watched and listened, I learned so many "how to's" from Bill..
The world has lost a wonderful human being.. RIP my friend...*

Ed Bentley

Ed Bentley - April 20, 2025 at 08:00 AM

DC

“ *Our family friendship began with our grandparents in 1910 and I was the beneficiary of his counsel for representing me in 1970. That led me to attend law school and a career representing people in need. David Clinton Carter*

David Clinton Carter - April 16, 2025 at 05:05 PM

LM

“ He was truly an amazing man and I'm honored to have known and worked for him for 13 years. My heartfelt condolences to his family.



Lilly McKeown - April 16, 2025 at 02:40 PM

KF

“ We sincerely wish to extend to all of Bill's family our deepest condolences. May you be comforted by the cherished memories you all have. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all at this time.



Kevin M. Mason Funeral Home family - April 16, 2025 at 06:17 AM