



40/4 chair



David Rowland, famed designer of the tidy 40/4 stack chair, dies at 86.

In a \$40 per month Upper Manhattan one-room apartment, David Rowland dreamed of a chair that could provide comfort for hours and then stack up neatly and compactly at the end of the day. Working at odd hours on his time, Mr. Rowland created model after model, removing aspects and changing the delicate curves of the frame; he finally had it—the “40 in 4” chair—a chair that would stack 40 in a four foot space. It had never before been done.

The next step—to find a manufacturer that would make the chair. This would prove to be the toughest step of all. His design simply would not sell. Over and over Mr. Rowland was told there was “no market for a stacking chair.” 8 years

went by before GF furniture agreed to manufacture the chair. The first project would make or break the success of the chair—a massive 17,000 chair order for the prestigious University of Chicago, then selling for \$16 per chair. The order went off without a hitch and the rest, well, is history.

One year after the chair hit the market, in 1964, the 40/4 was awarded the grand prize at the esteemed Milan Triennale and then went on to earn eight more awards in the design community. The chair may be seen at one of 14 museums around the world, where it holds permanent exhibits. Currently, the 40/4 chair is manufactured in North America by OSI Furniture.

David Lincoln Rowland was born in Los Angeles on Feb. 12, 1924, the only child of Earl and Neva Chilberg Rowland. His father, Earl, was an artist and the director of the Haggin Museum in Stockton, CA; his mother was a violinist.

Mr. Rowland graduated from the Principia College (IL) in 1949 after serving in the Army Air Force during WWII. He later received his master’s degree from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan before moving to New York and working for renowned industrial designer, Norman Bel Geddes.

Mr. Rowland is survived by his wife of 39 years, the former Erwin Wassum.