

May 17, 2006

The passing of our beloved and gentle soul, Peter Owen [of blessed memory] brings overwhelming sadness to our hearts, and no words seem adequate to pay tribute to such a noble person. The triumphant story of the meaningful life he led, the lessons we can learn, the strength and determination shown by him and his family is uplifting; - risen from the ashes, as it were. Would that we could all lead such purposeful lives. In recounting some of these events, we are also reminded of the value of the saving of a life.

Regrettably, Peter's health had been failing in recent years. His loving family did all in their power in the hopes of his recovery. In the past several weeks, when so seriously ill, his spirit and will to live was ever evident, but unfortunately, his body could not sustain him.

He was born Peter Offenbacher in Munich, Germany in 1924, to Paula and Lothar. They ultimately moved to Frankfurt. His early education was gained in Europe. He has a younger brother, Claude who is unable to be with us. He is a retired Professor of German literature in St. Catherines, Ontario; where he taught for many years.

The family lived in Germany during the rise of the nazi regime. A remote cousin who lived in Edmonton, Julius Erlanger, sought to navigate the difficult and oppressive bureaucracy of the Canadian immigration department to gain the right to bring Peter to Canada. He enlisted the considerable assistance of Harry A. Friedman, Q.C. in this frustrating quest. The Canadian immigration department's top bureaucracy was routinely, in a discriminatory manner, rejecting all humanitarian appeals to relax the no-entry rules for young children. They feared if these were not orphans, they might want to bring their parents over. That was the stated rationale. So long as his parents remained in Germany, there was no chance of his getting into Canada.

Thus, after agonizing decisions by Peters' parents and with the undertaking of an aunt and uncle to care for Peter while he, hopefully, awaited approval; his parents and Claude departed on a long and difficult journey and life in Bolivia - with little worldly possessions.

With undying efforts, H.A. Friedman was ultimately able to utilize every powerful contact available to him; and ultimately achieved an Order-In-Council dictated by the Federal Cabinet, which allowed 22 people into Canada -- including 8 Jews, of whom Peter was the only Jewish child.

Thus Peter left Germany just 3 weeks after the November 9<sup>th</sup>. 1938 Kristallnacht -- having passed - by the burned out synagogue where he had one year earlier celebrated his bar mitzvah.

After a harrowing sea voyage from Bremen with others fleeing Europe he arrived in New York, was cared for by friends, and ultimately journeyed via Toronto and Winnipeg to

Edmonton where he was nourished in all ways over the ensuing years by, especially, Harry and Fan Friedman and the Emily and Moe Lieberman family, with whose son, the Honourable Samuel Lieberman, he remained a lifelong friend and colleague.

Peter served, though not overseas, with the Royal Canadian Armored Corps until 1945. Quickly learning English and excelling in school, Peter acquired a B.A., and after the war, earned his law degree. By 1947 his parents and brother were able to enter Canada; and they were reunited.

In 1953 we were thrilled to celebrate Peter's marriage to my cousin, Violet Rose. Though the story has been related many times, this event went almost unrecorded; in that the hired photographers had forbidden others to take photographs, and had received a shipment of faulty film - and none could be developed. Fortunately, as a recent bar mitzvah, I was able to sneak a few frames of movie film on my newly received gift of a [wind up] Brownie movie camera; and so provided the one photo they have.

Together, Vi and Peter produced four wonderful and loving offspring in Tom, Dan, Susan and Mia. Apples of his eye. Each subsequently married equally outstanding partners in Lynne, Jacqueline, Leon and John -- and eight exemplary grandchildren resulted, Tess, Joe, Dustin, Sam, Josh, Shaun, Emma and Lauren; adding that further wonderfully joyous dimension to his, and their, life. The love and respect of each to the other and the closeness of the Family is a true gift. Peter took great pride in Violet's artistic ability and was fully supportive of this in every way.

Peter served his Profession with great distinction and in many capacities. First with the firm of Field, Hyndman and later as a partner in Field Owen until 1976 when he accepted the invitation of the Law Society of Alberta and the Canadian Bar Association to assume the post as the first full time director of the Legal Education Society of Alberta and of the Bar Association of Alberta. As such he organized the continuing education program for Alberta lawyers and restructured the bar admission examinations. He also taught at the University of Alberta. He was an early advocate and practitioner of arbitration as a form of alternative dispute resolution.

Other activities included his directorship of the Clifford E. Lee Foundation; counsel to the Law Society of Alberta and to the Board of Governors of the University of Alberta; Chairman of the Board of the University Hospital at which time the Walter C. Mackenzie Centre was completed. He was a President of the Edmonton Bar Association; a founding member of the Criminal Legal Aid Project in Alberta; and active in numerous other professional committees and endeavors.

He also found time to serve the Edmonton Art Gallery as President; be a trustee of the Beth Shalom Synagogue; serve on the Beit Horim seniors project, and many other boards and some Alberta Government committees.

In 1998, in recognition of his valued service the Edmonton Bar Association bestowed

upon Peter Owen Q.C. its Distinguished Service Award.

Coupled with all this ability, Peter is fondly remembered for his kind acts, wise counsel, integrity, gentleness, though not without a firm approach, beguiling smile and happy demeanor. His will to meet the challenges of life despite any adversity is a measure of the Peter Owen we loved.

Peter; to me and my Family you were a respected and trusted relative and friend, always available to provide support or just valued companionship. Your bright face, wit, wisdom and demeanor brought us joy. We shall miss your physical presence amongst us, but always cherish the joy and lessons of life you afforded us. Your legacy, a gift of enduring love and support to those whose lives you nurtured will be the touchstone to which your Family and all of us will strive to achieve.