

LESLIE GREEN, 91, WAS 'giant' in law of warfare

Retired U of Alberta political scientist wrote classic textbook

Last Saturday evening, Leslie Green, 91, one of the world's leading authorities on international law, was with his wife Lilian at the Winspear Centre, to hear the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra play Brahms.

The retired University of Alberta political scientist collapsed in the centre's elevator on the way up to his seat.

"If he'd had to scribble it, that's the way he might have wanted to go," his daughter Anne, a Calgary arts administrator, says of her father's death.

"He lived his life to the very end."

And what a life it was. In the course of 91 remarkable years, Green was an British intelligence operative; a war crimes prosecutor; a scholar; an author; an adviser to Canadian, Israeli, and U.S. governments; a patron of the arts; an irrepresible raconteur.

His writing and teaching on the law of warfare and humanitarian law shaped two generations of lawyers, diplomats and military officers around the world, and helped to redefine the way we prosecute international war crimes.

"He was really a giant in the field," says Michael Schmitt, chairman of the international law department at the United States Naval War College, and one of Green's former students.

"He wrote the classic textbook on the law of armed conflict. He was the first to really focus on the subject. He was a huge and important influence on the international community."

Andy Knight, chairman of the U of A department of political science, said Green had an enormous impact, especially in the areas of human rights and the laws of war.

"Students loved him and really gravitated toward his classes, even though he could be really tough on them," Knight said. "He didn't suffer fools gladly, but he would go to bat for anyone who had their human rights violated."

Green was born in London in 1920 into a Romanian-Jewish family. He grew up in London's tough East End, graduating from the University of London with a law degree in 1941. With the Second World War raging, he joined the British Army where he was asked to enrol at London's School of Oriental and African Studies to study Japanese. In 1943, he was then posted to India as a commissioned lieutenant with the Intelligence Corps.

As the war ended, Green became a military lawyer — serving both as a defender and a prosecutor of Indian and Burmese soldiers who had deserted to fight on the side of the Japanese.

In India, Green also met Lilian Meyer. She was a member of the Women's Royal Indian Naval Service, and of Calcutra's deep-rooted Sephardic Jewish community.

On their first date, they went horseback riding. Green was thrown, ending up in hospital with a broken pelvis. Meyer was a regular visitor. Then, she went riding, was thrown by the same horse, and broke her knee. Green visited her. In the end, the pelvis-shattering first date sparked a 65-year marriage.

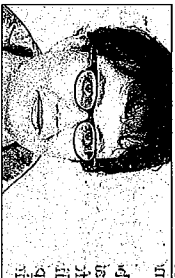
In 1946, Green returned to London as a lecturer in international law and began his prolific writing career. Between 1946 and 1960, he published 60 academic articles, as well as his first authoritative textbook, *International Law Through the Cases*. In 1960, Green, his wife, and Anne, their only child, left London for the University of Singapore, where Green served as dean of the law faculty. But in 1965, the family moved to Edmonton, where Green was recruited to join the U of A's department of political science.

"It was snowing in the middle of September when we got off the train from Vancouver," Anne recalls.

But the family quickly adjusted to life in Canada.

In addition to his teaching and research at

Paula Simons



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The U of A, Green drafted the Canadian Forces Manual on the Law of Armed Conflict and advised the government on everything from treaty negotiations to the Canada embassy's sheltering of Americans during the Iran hostage crisis. He also served on the board of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and Beth Shalom synagogue, and on the board of Theatre 3, the company Anne co-founded in 1970.

Along the way, among many other honours, he won the Order of Canada, was appointed a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and earned the U of A's highest awards for both research and teaching.

William Ferrick recently retired as a professor of international law at Dalhousie University. Before that, he spent 20 years as a military lawyer, and another 10 as senior legal adviser to the International Criminal Tribunal prosecuting war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. Green, he says, was his mentor.

Rather than trying to create acolytes to sit at his feet, says Ferrick, Green encouraged students to think for themselves. "He was what I'd call an independent scholar. He was always true to his own opinions. He acted as mentor to a number of people, but he never wanted to create a school of Leslie C. Green."

Green published nine books and more than 300 papers on everything from international terrorism to the legal status of West Berlin to the legal status of native treaties.

He finished and published his last book at the age of 86. And his writings was unusually clear and lively for an academic, short on theory and jargon, long on compelling historical examples.

Anne Green says what linked her father's academic interests was his unyielding passion for human rights.

"He was always fighting for the underdog. He believed in human rights in general, and the rights of the individual. He did everything he could for justice wherever possible."

Officially, Green retired from the U of A in 1991, at the age of 71. But he scarcely slowed down. He was a visiting professor at the University of Denver, then held the prestigious Stockholm chair in international law at the U.S. Naval War College.

Michael Schmitt says the contrast between the diminutive scholar and the college's brawny naval officers was both striking and funny.

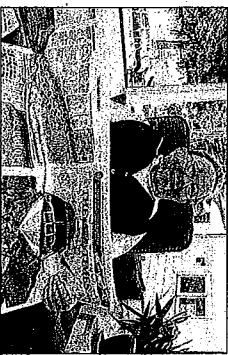
"He was big in his field, but he was a tiny little guy, kind of like a leprechaun, surrounded by these giant U.S. military officers. But he would keep audiences mesmerized when he spoke. The officers loved him because his work wasn't theoretical or ideological, but full of practicality. He was very focused on what happens on the battlefield once you get there."

Green's public profile increased after the 9/11 attacks, when media from across Canada called him for his insights on everything from international terrorism to the legality of the war in Iraq to the torture and humiliation of prisoners at Abu Ghraib.

He supported the war in Iraq, arguing that it was "a duty of states to act in the name of humanity and interfere on behalf of citizens being put upon by a tyrant." But he deplored what he saw as instances of mistreatment of Iraqi and Afghan prisoners by both American and Canadian forces.

"The trouble seems to be that we have become so close to Big Brother, we have forgotten what our obligations are toward prisoners of war," he said.

His daughter says he was always "extremely opinionated, but it was impossible to place him in any kind of left-wing/right-wing box. He was way too broad a thinker to pigeonhole that way. He was a lawyer and he was really able to see all sides."



JOURNAL FILE
Leslie Green reads the Times of London, which he received daily.

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