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Aug 26th 2008

Edmonton

With love from Gillian,

Lynn asked Cory and me to speak for HER todayin Lynn's words.."to be her mouthpiece"....Cory passed this honour on to me and I am humbled to share some of our thoughts and feelings about Eugene, but mostly to echo those of Lynn's.

There is so much to be said about Eugene...there has been a great deal in the media about his life these past few days as Eugene Pechet's life has left a legacy that will remain for years to come.

Where to start...

Eugene Pechet stood about 5' 5" tall, he never weighed more than 130 lbs. and wore a size 7 shoe....and yet he was a giant of a man in so many ways...No height was too high for him to scale, no distance too far to travel, and certainly no challenge too daunting... ! He was admired for his tenacity and his foresight, but most of all he was adored by his daughter. To Lynn...he was her hero.....

Yes, Lynn adored her Father ...a father daughter relationship is unique at the best of times, but theirs truly was a special relationship....when Lynn walked into a room, her fathers' face would literally light up...In her words.."he would make me feel so special he would always smile from ear to ear when he saw me coming ...he would clap his hands as though I was the most wonderful person in the world!"....Their relationship was based on respect and love...I watched them over the years...and was always aware of their mutual admiration for each other when I saw them together...

**When Lynn made a speech at her Father's 90th birthday last year, she told him how proud she, and indeed all the family were of him .."Your kind deeds and personal accomplishments have earned you the respect of so many, Dad" she said....
"You have set an example for all of us to follow...you have taught us to give to those less fortunate than ourselves and to share what we have" ...**

And at that same celebration, Eugene's sister, Gwenny's husband, Arthur Hiller said quite simply.."You have done so much for so many over the years Eugene"...and indeed he had! .

Lynn always thought of her father as "a man who won life's races, but declined its laurels"....

Eugene was a modest man...unassuming and reserved...and yet one always felt you could turn to him for advice and guidance...which he gave willingly and with deep wisdom and foresight, because Eugene was a man of vision ...

He worked hard all of his life...he knew what had to be done and he did it.... he never put off for tomorrow what could be done today!!

The "Business" of Hotels was always his love...and when he talked about his hotels, he did so with passion and with so much pride....

Eugene never sought recognition or wanted accolades..in fact, that made him uncomfortable...yet there are many individuals who made successes of their own lives because of him...My own son, in his words said, "He was an incredible man...he was part of my destiny!" ...because when Brian wanted advice, he sought out Eugene..!

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Oh yes, Eugene started the Canadian Western bank, and yes he bought or built some 25 hotels, but he always had time for the little guy...he was blessed with that unusual quality of humility....a quality that set him apart, because he never forgot his own humble beginnings...

He knew every corner of this city....and in fact every town along the Alaska Highway...he was an entrepreneur with a vision ...most hotels all along the Alaska Highway belonged to Eugene at one time or another...

Eugene will remain a significant corner stone of Edmonton. His footprints will leave their mark on the landscape of this city and indeed Alberta...

Eugene Pechet, the husband, the father, the grandfather the friend, the mentor, has left an indelible mark on all of us, and in particular on All of his direct descendants who are here today..... Howard, his son, and his wife Henriette, and their sons Jason and David, his daughter Lynn and her husband Michael and their son Josh, and Pat his loving wife of 22 years and her family....

Eugene was so proud of each and every one of the members of his family...and he would have been extra proud of you today Josh knowing that you worked so closely with Joe Bidan the possible future V.P. of the United Sates of America...Gene was an avid reader and he was always passionate about politics and how it related to the rest of the world.....

Eugene Pechet used his life so well....he gave of himself at every turn...he was a man who achieved more than any other I have known..he was an example to all of how to have lived a life worth living...

In Lynn's words..."Dad you have done more Mitzvahs than anyone I know"....

Lynn called her father every day at about 5.30 La Jolla time...Pat will attest to that!

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He called her too, of course and on one of her many visits to Edmonton to see her father, he left a message on the answering machine thanking her for the most wonderful day they had spent together.....it was a message filled with utter joy and love....

I know you will miss those calls Lynn....But you did have the opportunity of telling your father the other night...and I believe they were the last words he heard....

You said....

“Dad, you did everything right...we loved you...you couldn’t have done anything better!”....

This week we lost a dear friend...Yes I shall miss my very dear and special friend..... EUGENE PECHET

When I was very much younger I always wondered what made a pioneer. At 5 or 6 I thought it was Daniel Boone fighting his way westward wearing a raccoon cap and clutching a single shot musket. At 7 or 8 it was Davy Crocket fighting to the death at the Alamo, saving the New Republic of Texas from hordes of unintelligible Mexicans.

But sometimes heroic pioneers are not larger than life; they're just little 5'8" boys who leave home at 16 to go up North to work in the mines at Gold Fields. And that's how my father began. By the early 1940's he was working for his uncle, Hy Weisler, selling dry good to all the country stores in Northern Saskatchewan. But every night he would come back to the Auditorium Hotel in North Battleford because it was the only hotel within 90 miles that had a room with a bathtub that wasn't down the hall. In 1944, with all his savings he bought the hotel and by the late 1950's he was opening up the North Country building the first modern day motor hotels from Calgary and Edmonton all the way up the Alaska Highway. By the time I joined him in 1973 he had built or owned 21 hotels.

In 1984 in the back boardroom of the Mayfield Inn he began with Fred Sparrow, Bob Splane and their assistant Esther Edwards, what was to become the Canadian Western Bank. For all his years of building he had been forced to go hat in hand to Toronto to get financing for hotels in towns that Eastern Bankers had never heard of and he like his partner Charles Allard, desperately wanted a regional bank so that Western Canadians would be spared the humiliation he so often felt.

So what are pioneers? They are imaginative, creative, builders with the foresight and courage to go where few have gone before and that was certainly our father. Dad was never much for awards, but I think that the last honor he received in 1997 said it all "The Province's Pinnacle Lifetime Achievement Award" and he certainly had reached the pinnacle in his field. But Dad's field was not only business, it was people as well.

Several years ago at my youngest son's graduation from Cornell, the keynote speaker was John Sharp, President of Four Seasons. He said to the graduates of the hotel school that to be a hotelier you must be able to work side by side with all kinds of people. All colors, all races, all religions, immigrants from the world over, maids who barely spoke English, dishwashers who couldn't speak English at all. My father not only worked with them, he did all he could to help them get ahead and prosper and he did it with genuine empathy.

Soft spoken, unassuming, a humble, gentle man, I will always remember him in his last years sitting quietly reading his paper in the lobby of the River Rock Hotel or watching his beloved History channel on TV. In the words of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, my father had learned that the secret of a good old age is simply an honorable pact with solitude. Finally, for him to see his children and grandchildren prosper, was his greatest joy.

I must end by thanking my father's wife Pat. She was a wonderful companion and helpmate to our dad for over 20 years and she has our love and admiration just as she had my fathers.