

Obituaries

COOK, Lionel Eugene

Born April 28, 1919, London, England. Died, October 8, 2006, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Lionel Eugene Cook was born in London near the Church of St. Mary-le-Bow (true Cockneys are born within the sound of the "Bow Bells"). Lionel had an older sister May, and an older brother Peter, nicknamed "Boy," who died seven years before Lionel was born. Lionel was nicknamed "Joe" by his family and childhood friends. Lionel's father Eugene drove a London cab. His mother, Ellen (Fowler) managed a button factory, and later sold fish and chips from a stall near the Strand. Lionel loved his schooldays, and excelled at penmanship. His childhood was a happy one, with fond memories of family gatherings at Christmas and the companionship of his cousins, Jessie and Joyce.

Lionel's first job was as a junior clerk with Lloyds of London. Lionel's military career began when he joined the Territorial Army, partly to play Rugby with his friends. In 1939, with the outbreak of the Second World War, Lionel joined the Eighth Army, and later served in North Africa, the Middle East, and Italy. His mother sent him packages of books and hand-knitted socks. His experiences with his fellow soldiers deepened his love for the arts and the role they play in friendships.

Lionel began his post-war career as manager of a dairy farm in Scotland. Upon immigrating to Canada, Lionel again managed a farm near Ottawa. In the late 1950's, Lionel, his first wife Sheila, and their adopted children, Roselle and Julian, headed west to Calgary. Lionel joined the firm of Reed, Shaw and McNaught, now known as AON Reed Stenhouse, the largest insurance brokerage in the world. Lionel specialized in liability insurance. After his divorce from Sheila, Lionel traveled in Mexico and took a position in insurance in Los Angeles before rejoining the liability department at Reed Stenhouse, and making his home in Edmonton. With a gift for mentorship, Lionel taught liability insurance at a local college. By the 1970's Lionel was senior vice-president in charge of aviation insurance. He and his team gained an international reputation and the respect of the entire industry for their work on behalf of clients like Ward Air.

Lionel practiced the arts of conversation and letter writing. He told stories with a zest that engaged his hearers. Friends treasured his personal letters for their style, content, and exquisite penmanship. His favorite conversation topics ranged from history to poetry and from travel to tennis. Lionel was an accomplished painter. He created striking miniatures and larger landscapes in watercolour, oil, and acrylic. His hand-painted Christmas cards were a joy to receive. Lionel was also a musician, and particularly loved the music of the 1930's, 40's, and 50's. His Yamaha Clavinova, which he played daily, was an eightieth birthday present to himself. Nature itself was an art form for Lionel, as is witnessed in the beautifully crafted gardens that cover his property on 66 Avenue. He also loved sailing on Lake Wabamun.

In a union spanning thirty-eight years, Lionel married Linda Jones (nee Fowler), becoming stepfather to Linda's daughters Alison and Jennifer. Lionel is held in constant and loving memory by wife Linda, stepdaughter Alison, grandchildren Sean Erlam and Petra Boerigter and their parents Tim and Laura Erlam of Leduc, best friend Cora Tripp, honorary grandchildren Chloe Cosgrove and Rachel and Sarah Smith-Gay, and all of his dear friends and associates.

At Lionel's request, there will be no funeral. You can honour Lionel by making a donation to Foster Parents Plan of Canada: www.fosterparentsplan.ca (tel. 1-800-891-3931). At a date to be announced, a celebration of his life will take place at the Royal Glenora Club in Edmonton, Alberta. Friends and associates are also invited to share their memories and stories of Lionel in writing as a commemoration. Please send your stories to Cora at Coratripp@shaw.ca.

Serenity Funeral Service, 5311 - 91