



REMEMBERING
Malcolm Peter Yelland (Peter)

July 27, 1934 - September 2, 2019



Malcolm "Peter" Yelland - July 27, 1934 - September 2, 2019

Peter died at home on the evening of September 2, 2019 with his wife, soul mate and best friend, Ann, by his side. His passing is mourned by his step children: Erin Sutherland (Vancouver) and Christopher Sutherland (Nanaimo) and his wife, Gillian and adored grandsons, Declan and Calum; his daughter Elizabeth Yelland (Sydney, Australia); his daughters Katrina and Melissa (Victoria) and Sarah (Nanaimo); his sister in law, Jane Lessimore and her husband, Peter and their family (Pontllanfraith/Blackwood, S. Wales); his cousins: Liz Cross and family (St. Agnes/Porthtowan/London); Jean Sharp and daughters, Judy and Becky and their families (St. Agnes/Feock). Peter's passing is mourned by his many close friends whom he considered "family". Also missing Peter terribly is his constant little four-footed companion, Sadie.

Peter was the only child of Lloyd and Ada (nee Curtis) Yelland. He was born at home on July 27, 1934, at "Holmsleigh", Indian Queens, Cornwall, UK. He had a happy childhood roaming the Cornish downs with his mates, occasionally swimming in blue pools and feasting on his favourite delicacy, Cornish Pasties. Peter attended Newquay Grammar School, followed by fine arts training at Truro Art School and later, after two years of National Service, attended London University's Shoreditch Teachers' Training College. His education continued years later following immigration to Canada at the University of British Columbia, University of Victoria and later, obtaining an MA at Gonzaga University.

From a young age, Peter excelled in both the performing arts and the visual arts. He designed and produced posters for his village's summer fairs and talent shows. During this period, Peter also studied piano for many years but soon branched off

into the world of boogie-woogie/Dixieland jazz and explored other styles of music - where ever his "ear" took him. As a youngster, Peter travelled with the male voice choir his father belonged to, as a soloist. Later, in his teen years, Peter sang tenor roles in G & S production in Newquay, which featured soloists from the BBC. His abilities were noticed during his first year at Shoreditch by the music professor, A.G. Harwood, who took him under his wing. Conducting was not part of the regular curriculum at Shoreditch but as Peter showed a natural aptitude and willing, Professor Harwood laid out a course of studies for him and thus, began Peter's life-long love of conducting choirs, musical productions and small orchestras.

During his teaching years in the Cowichan Valley from 1958 to 1975, Peter started choirs and got people singing, wherever he was. He was also heavily involved in the visual arts community giving workshops in painting and drawing (multi point perspective) and judging art shows. In the late 1950's, while teaching at the high school in Lake Cowichan, his choir took top honours at the Duncan Music Festival. Later at Quamichan Middle School, he formed a boys' choir (the "Yelland Volunteers") which sang among other things, Bach Chorales. In the mid 1960's Peter started the Polyphonic Singers, a community choir which continued until 1976, when he moved to Kelowna to continue his teaching career.

At this time, Peter directed many musical productions for the Duncan Music Club (the forerunner of the current Cowichan Musical Society). He also sang numerous principal roles in musical theatre productions and in oratorio productions in Lake Cowichan, Duncan, Victoria and Vancouver. He became well known for singing the tenor solos in Handel's "Messiah" in Victoria every Christmas. From 1962 to 1967, Peter performed as principal tenor in several University of Victoria Festivals: "Elizabethan", "Shakespearean" and "Jacobean" with Dr. Erica Kurth. Peter's semi-professional singing career continued in Kelowna with the Okanagan Symphony.

During Peter's years in Kelowna, he served as president of the Kelowna Music School from approximately 1977 to 1979. During this time, he formed a choir to help raise funds for the Music School. He also helped to produce and direct G & S Operettas ("Pirates of Penzance", "Ruddigore" and "Yeoman of the Guard") in support of the Music School. At this time, Peter was invited to join a group of choral directors at the inception of the BC Choral Federation. He was unable to take advantage of this offer as he was involved in spearheading the formation of the Kelowna International Festival of the Performing Arts.

Peter retired from the Kelowna School District at the end of the school year in 1989 and returned to Duncan to direct the Cowichan Musical Society's production of "Showboat" which production took place in early 1990. Travelling back and forth from Kelowna to Duncan for rehearsals rekindled Peter's longing to be closer to the ocean and his desire to return to the Cowichan Valley on a permanent basis. In June 1990, at an audition for a musical revue planned by the Cowichan Musical Society, Peter met his future wife, Ann, who auditioned for a singing role that day. This encounter ultimately lead to a major change in both their lives which resulted in a very happy, loving and fulfilling marriage.

Once established back in the Cowichan Valley, Peter, continued his involvement

with the Cowichan Musical Society and directed (or acted in) numerous shows: "Memory Lane" - 1990; "Mikado" - 1991; "Desert Song" - 1992; "That's Entertainment" - 1995; "Iolanthe" - 1999; "Gondoliers" - 2001; "HMS Pinafore" - 2006; "The Champagne Ball" (Die Fledermaus) - 2007; "The Pirates of Penzance" - 2015; and "Oliver" - 2016.

In 1997 Peter, with Ann's assistance, started the "Opus 1 Singers" which performed regular concerts for approximately 10 years and specialized in the performance of the smaller works (requiems, masses, motets) of the Masters. From 1998 to 2004, Opus 1 hosted a choral festival known as "Cowichan Corofest". Corofest presented workshops for island choral singers featuring some of the best known west coast choral conductors as clinicians: Dr. George Corwin, Morna Edmundson, Diane Loomer, Bruce Pullan, Imant Raminsh, Don James and Brigid Coult. During this period Peter also served as the mid-island representative on the board of the BC Choral Federation.

In collaboration with Christine Dandy, Peter turned over the directorship of the Opus 1 Singers to her. When the number of male singers began to wain, the decision was made that the choir would continue as a women's choir. "Encore! Women's Choir" was launched. This choir continues today and under Christine's leadership and maintains the high standard of choral excellence Peter envisioned.

In addition to Peter's involvement in the visual and performing arts, he was also involved in many community organizations in the Cowichan Valley: circa 1966-68 - President, Canadian Mental Health Association and assisted in creating the Crisis Line; circa 1970 - President of the Cowichan Valley Arts Council; 1997-2007 - Board Member - Friends of the Cowichan Theatre; 1998-2006 - mid island representative to the BC Choral Federation; and 2000-2003 - United Way Allocations Committee.

Peter loved the outdoors and in particular, being on the water. For many years Peter and Ann sailed the inside waters in their sailboat, "Opus II" and enjoyed many trips to Desolation Sound and the Gulf Islands. They also enjoyed many camping trips with family and friends to the west coast. Hiking, picnics, digging for clams and generally enjoying nature were things that made Peter happy. He was always armed with his camera to catch that "special shot" which would later become the subject of a painting.

Peter and Ann enjoyed many trips to Peter's Cornwall exploring his childhood haunts, belting through the lanes and spending time with his cousins. Visiting Cornish gardens in the springtime, walking the headlands in the "heavy misty wet" or in the driving rain was all part of the experience! Trips to Cornwall were combined with visits to Ann's sister Jane and brother in law, Peter, in South Wales, and their family. Happy times!

The Yelland home was always a meeting place for friends and family. Whether it was an informal get together, dinner party or a Saturday barbeque, the evening often evolved into a good old sing-song around the piano. This pattern continued until Peter's final days at home. Peter will always be remembered for his deep devotion to Ann and their family, his charismatic personality, quick wit, tremendous sense of humour and for never suffering fools gladly.

Special thanks to Peter's doctors for their wonderful care: Dr. Kubatsky, Dr. Morris and to Dr. Bronn and her staff at the Nanaimo Kidney Care Clinic. Thanks also to the nursing staff and care aids at the Cowichan District Hospital and in particular those on the 2nd Floor and on 3rd Floor North. The care Peter received was exemplary. Peter's care at home was provided by the palliative care team headed by Dr. Masuda. A heartfelt "thank you" to these special angels.

A memorial concert is in the planning stages to honour the life and contributions made by Peter to the arts community in the Cowichan Valley. The concert will take place on Saturday, November 16, 2019 at the Christian Reformed Church on Trunk Road. Details will follow in the coming weeks.

