

McMEEKIN, Thomas Baird (Tom) [UNTD NONSUCH '56 U-51320] (1937 - 2015) Age: 78



McMEEKIN, The Honourable Thomas Baird . February 6, 1937 – September 3, 2015

Tom McMeeKin died peacefully at the age of 78. He will forever be loved and respected by his family, including his wife of 47 years, Alexandra (Sandy) McMeeKin (nee Gunter). He was predeceased by his parents, John and Peggy and his cousins Judy and Grant Fletcher. He is survived by his wife; children Hilary (Joseph Kuhach) and Greg; siblings John and Abigail Adamowski (nee McMeeKin); godchildren; numerous nieces and nephews and his grandchildren Ben and Sophie. Born in Winnipeg, MB, Tom was raised in Calgary, AB and attended the University of Alberta, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in 1959. He then moved to Ontario and graduated with a law degree from Queens in 1963. Tom articulated with McLaws, McLaws, Deyell, Dinkel, Floyd & Moore and was admitted to the Bar in 1964. He then spent a year practicing law in Banff with Nesbit, Beaumont & Church, after which he joined the firm Mason, Lamarsh & Kryczka. He was with Mason & Co. for 10 years until he was appointed to the Provincial Court of Alberta in 1976. The Royal Canadian Navy played an important role in Tom's life. He was a sea cadet, a member of the University Naval Training Division and an officer in the Naval Reserve. Tom always put others first and was an active member of the community. He served on many boards and committees and was a member of the Zetland Masonic Lodge. In January 1981, Tom was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. As a result of the disease, Tom moved into long-term care in January 2004. He lived at the Colonel Belcher long-term care facility for 10 years until his death. A Celebration of Tom's Life will be held at The Anglican Parish of Christ Church (3602 – 8th Street S.W. Calgary, AB T2T 3A7) on Monday, September 14, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. In lieu of flowers, if you wish, please make contributions in honour of Tom McMeeKin to the University of Calgary MS Clinic, Foothills Medical Centre, 1403 29 St NW Calgary, AB T2N 2T9. In living memory of Tom, a tree will be planted at Fish Creek Provincial Park. Published in The Calgary Herald from Sept. 10 to Sept. 12, 2015

In addition, a Calgary Herald article concerning his passing, entitled "Legal profession loses 'gentleman' judge and advocate for the disabled" is linked below;

Retired provincial court judge Tom McMeeKin, who was an advocate for disabled people in long-term care facilities, and who had dealt with his multiple sclerosis with grace and dignity for many years while on the bench, has died.

"My dealing with him on the bench ... the classic term 'officer and a gentleman' comes to mind," longtime Calgary Crown prosecutor Mac Vomberg said on Thursday. "He was a very classy judge and all-around nice guy.

"I remember a lot of his cases were before the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It was really in an era when the burden of proof was a little different from today. He'd sit back, do a lot of analysis and listening, reading between the lines, and come up with a decision that was legally sustainable and based on common sense."

Vomberg recalled McMeeKin first struggling with one cane, then two canes, then a walker and finally a wheelchair, but never let it negatively affect his ability to do his job or deal with people inside and outside a courtroom.

McMeekin died Sept. 3. He was 78.

Jim Ogle, provincial court Assistant Chief Judge in Calgary who appeared in front of McMeekin many times as a lawyer, said the man left a very positive professional and personal legacy in his 27 years on the bench from 1976 until his illness forced him to retire in 2003.

“To virtually everyone who ever appeared in front of him, he was known as a consummate gentleman on the bench,” Ogle recalled. “Despite an incapacitating disability, he never allowed the stress of that or let it affect him. He was a man of amazing patience. I can’t imagine anyone having a bad word to say about him.

“I also admired him as a champion for people in long-term residences or confined to their residence in long-term care who were disabled by age or illness. He was vocal for people in those situations.”

Ogle said despite McMeekin’s disability and being confined to a wheelchair, he “participated in life,” competing in activities at the Colonel Belcher care facility for the past 10 years. He said he was also an avid Toronto Blue Jays’ fan and participated in the annual judges’ golf pool, which he won this year for the second time.

In a letter to the editor in the Calgary Herald on Nov. 19, 2004, McMeekin lashed out at the then Conservative government over funding for long-term care, saying understaffing due to funding cuts seriously affects quality of life for seniors and the infirm.

McMeekin said conditions were so bad at the Carewest Sarcee facility where he was then residing that residents were limited to one bath per week. He also said he was forced to go to bed at 9 p.m. because there’s not enough staff working later in the evening to assist him.

“(I listen) to elderly women screaming because they have been left on the john for half an hour,” he said. “This type of things diminishes the quality of life.”

The retired judge had presented a 1,500-name petition to Premier Ralph Klein’s office that September on the issue.

McMeekin, who was born in Winnipeg but raised in Calgary, graduated from University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Arts in 1959. He moved to Ontario and earned a law degree from Queen’s in 1963, then was admitted to the Bar a year later.

He practised law for a year in Banff before moving back to Calgary and working with the firm Mason, Lamarsh and Kryczka for 10 years before he was appointed to the bench.

The Royal Canadian Navy was also a significant part of his life — first as a sea cadet, then a member of the University Naval Training Division, and an officer in the Naval Reserve.

He served on many boards and committees and was a member of the Zetland Masonic Lodge.

McMeekin is survived by Sandy, his wife of 47 years, daughter Hilary and son Greg.

A celebration of his life will be held at the Anglican Parish of Christ Church, 3602 8th Street S.W., on Monday at 1 p.m.

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Tom had 3 UNTD summers; '57, '58, '59.

He was Commissioned as a SLT(S) RCN(R), Sen. 1 Jul '59, O-50405, attached to TECUMSEH.

Promoted to LT(S), 1 Jul '61.

Greg McKenzie recalls that Tom was at TECUMSEH when he first joined the unit in 1967, remained a strong supporter and was also a long time member of the Naval Museum of Alberta Society making generous donations over the years.

Bill C.