



Peter Weller Ehlen

January 5, 1933 - October 1, 2015

Peter W. Ehlen, beloved husband, father, respected Santa Barbara Structural Engineer and esteemed watercolor artist, passed away peacefully on Oct. 1, 2015 with his wife Jean Clarke Ehlen and immediate family at his bedside. Peter had been courageously navigating his gradual decline from Parkinson's Disease with Lewy Body Dementia. During his illness he never complained and was always smiling and thankful.

Peter was the only child born to John Henry Ehlen and Paula Weller Ehlen in Pasadena on Jan. 5, 1933. He grew up in Pasadena but made many trips over the summer months to the Midwest to visit cousins and to Orange, California to visit his paternal Grandparents and cousins and the legendary Ehlen and Grote mercantile store started by his Grandfather. During his youth, Peter was a member of the Pasadena Boy's Choir and was chosen from 200 boys for a 20-boy choir that sang with the San Francisco Grand Opera Company in a production of "Boris Godounoff" in the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. He also sang in "La Boheme" and "Carmen" at the age of 12. He was in school leadership and lettered in football and track in both Jr. High and High School. He envisioned starting his college career in Architecture at UC Berkeley but changed course to major in Civil Engineering when given the opportunity to attend Stanford University. Graduating from Stanford in 1955 in Civil Engineering, Peter then spent two years in Anchorage, Alaska as a private in the Army and was newlywed. After his service he and his wife

moved to Santa Barbara and started a family. He was blessed with three children, Pete, Mark and Alison.

Peter leaves a strong structural engineering legacy in the City of Santa Barbara. Many of the Santa Barbara engineers currently in practice today worked for him and benefited from his mentorship and generosity. He began his career working for Don Shugart and Stan Mendes as well as being lead engineer at Arendt Mosher Grant Architects. In 1963 he returned to Stanford to pursue a Master's degree in their new Structural Engineering program. Upon graduation he returned to Santa Barbara with his young family and opened his own structural engineering practice in 1966. The office and legacy continues to this day at 1119 Garden Street as Ehlen, Spiess and Haight, Inc. He will be remembered for his professional one-liners as well as the invention of the "System 1000" drafting system.

Peter was inspired by the natural beauty of our local environment and appreciated the history of Santa Barbara and the many historically significant buildings that are our treasured and protected structures. Being an avid enthusiast of California history Peter loved to visit the Museum of Natural History and the Santa Barbara Historical Museum. He also appreciated the walking paths and beauty of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. With a keen eye for the beauty in older buildings, Peter joined the Victoria Street Group (Bill Mahan, Ed Lenvik, Fred Sweeney, Jack Dewey), a small group of Santa Barbarans who painted every Saturday and exhibited their work at shows. Many of Peter's paintings hang in private collections as well as the Santa Barbara Biltmore Hotel.

Peter loved listening to Handel's Messiah, cutting the grass while smoking a cigar, overnight hikes to Forebush Flat, riding his bicycle, buying a new bicycle, chocolate, The Awhanee Lodge at Yosemite, The Copper Coffeepot, Casa Blanca Restaurant, train rides, running, sailing, teasing architects,

selling paintings, geology and the mystery of earthquakes.

Peter loved to sail on "Wet Wednesdays" with long time friends Tom and Nancy Bollay. This friendship included trips from running the Bay to Breakers race in San Francisco to masterfully building creations for the yearly sand castle contest on East Beach (making sure that the castles were structurally sound). They traveled to Italy and gained new inspiration for painting.

Week #6 at Stanford Sierra Camp on Fallen Leaf Lake near Lake Tahoe was an annual family tradition beginning when his children were young to years spent with his adult children and grandchildren. This will be forever a special place in all of his children and grandchildren's hearts who were able to enjoy the magic of that week with their Grandpa.

During his children's high school and college years, Peter was a supportive fan of all of their sporting events becoming a driver for many of his daughter Alison's track team members for meets out of town. He visited their colleges and took great pride in his three children's professional lives that would unfold after college graduation. He always made an effort to see his children at least once a year, no matter where they lived.

In September of 2000, Peter married his beloved Jean Clarke in a beautiful ceremony in the courtyard of the Covarrubias Adobe surrounded by their closest family and friends. This marked the beginning of a time of great happiness and travel, shared watercolor painting interest, CAMA concerts and the welcoming of new family members and grandchildren. Thanks go to mutual friends Mary Jean and John Van Dyke for setting them up on a blind date.

Peter will be missed by his loving wife Jean, his son Pete (Vicki) Ehlen and

their children Ryan, Heather and Nick; son Mark Ehlen of Albuquerque and his children Forrest and Madison; and daughter Alison Galindo and her children Nico and Kenny. He is also survived by Jean's family - Martin (Jennifer) Clarke and new baby Kaia, Teresa (Jeff) Polito and their children Ryan, Rachel, Lauren and Nicole. We will always think of Peter whenever we enjoy chocolate, train rides or family barbeques. He was happiest surrounded by gatherings of friends, family, laughter and conversation. Peter has many friends and associates who will miss him and remember what a kind, fair, positive friend and role model he was to all.

A Celebration of Peter's life will be announced at a later date.

We would like to thank all his caregivers who were so gracious and loving, especially the staff at Villa Alamar for helping Peter ("Mr. Pedro") this past year.