

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin

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news

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## Friends remember Pedersen's giving

by Jenn Ballard  
Law Bulletin staff writer

Peer Pedersen, who built a reputation for his civic involvement and maintained a law practice for six decades, died Monday at age 87.

In many ways, he was bigger than life, said Herbert J. Linn, a partner at Pedersen & Houpt.

He would come into a room and, through his sheer presence and personality, would dominate — not in a negative way but a positive way.

Born in Denmark, Pedersen — the founder and former chairman of Pedersen & Houpt — moved to Chicago with his family in 1926 and became a U.S. citizen.

John H. Muehlstein, a partner at Pedersen & Houpt, described Pedersen, his uncle, as a self-made man.

My grandmother ran a bunch of boarding houses in the Austin area, and he worked and helped support the family, Muehlstein said. He developed contacts early on ... and created wealth for himself and wealth for a lot of other people. He took his early opportunities and capitalized on them.

Pedersen served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and then attended the University of Illinois College of Law, earning a degree in 1948.

Pedersen served as the chairman of a committee that raised \$12 million for the law school to build the Peer and Sarah Pedersen Pavilion, which opened in 1994.

Chief U.S. District Judge James F. Holderman knew Pedersen for four decades and said Pedersen's glowing personality and quick wit accompanied his kind spirit.

Peer always had a smile and his strong spirit always shined through, Holderman said.

Pedersen worked for several years with Illinois Sen. W. Russell Arrington's law firm, Arrington & Healy, before he started his own firm in 1957.

Pedersen practiced in the areas of corporate finance, tax, securities and real estate law until he retired in 2010.

Linn, Pedersen's law firm colleague who knew him for 43 years, said he admired how he treated his clients.

I was immediately impressed by not only Peer's devotion to the law but his clients, he said. They were his friends. He devoted himself 24/7 to the practice of law.

Linn described Pedersen as a dealmaker.

He had the ability to consummate those deals, he said. When he would represent both parties in a deal at one time and there was a split up, he kept an incredible relationship with both parties even when they went separate

ways.

Pedersen invested in many charitable causes, including a 40-year association with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago.

He also served on the boards of directors of Children's Memorial Hospital, the Lyric Opera and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago.

He was a very successful person, but he made that success so he could share it with others, said Marc D. Janser, a partner at Pedersen & Houpt. He didn't care about the money. He gave it away. He was the most generous individual.

Thirty-five years ago, Pedersen loaned \$39,000 to Janser to buy a house in the Lincoln Park neighborhood.

Peer invited that, Janser said. He wanted to look out for you and for you to have what you wanted.

Pedersen also served on the board of directors of Waste Management Inc., where he became known for his work ethic, said Dean Buntrock, former CEO of Waste Management.

He had a certain amount of charisma, but his best quality was that he was smarter than most people, Buntrock said. He was such a tough competitor. He never quit.

Pedersen is survived by his five children: Leslie Bertholdt, Peer D. Pedersen, Kristen Meers, Mia Guidarini and Erik Pedersen; and 10 grandchildren. Pedersen's wife of 58 years, Sarah, died in 2007.

Visitation is from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday at Wenban Funeral Home, at 320 E. Vine Ave., in Lake Forest.

The funeral is 10 a.m. Saturday at the Church of the Holy Spirit, at 400 E. Westminster Road, in Lake Forest.

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