



Peter D Ludwell

February 17, 1945 - May 19, 2022

Peter D. Ludwell, the man who beat death on many occasions has finally died in this sleep at age 77.

Peter D. Ludwell died in his sleep shortly before 3:15 am on May 19, 2022. What is important here is not the death as sad, painful, and unfortunate as it is, but rather the life that proceeded it. Peter's life was exceptional in both the good and bad senses of the word. Peter's life and character are like Martin Heidegger's translation of the word onion in ancient Greek word for truth as 'peeling the layers of an onion.' So let's peel beginning near the beginning.

Peter spent his early years in Hawaii. His birth certificate states he was born in Honolulu on February 17, 1945. Peter's parents were both quite busy. His father Hubert D. Ludwell was a British born, West. Point graduate, American army intelligence officer. His mother was Marie W. Ludwell a working R.N. with high professional standards.

Because both were busy, he was often left in the care of a Japanese-American woman, descendant of a noble Japanese family. One day she returned home from an errand and found Peter alone in the dining room finishing up her sons' ikebana, Japanese flower arrangements. Her sons had run out early to play baseball! Peter was left alone to do the flowers. (A proper traditional Japanese gentleman was required to understand the how's and why's of ikebana.) Study Peter's life and character carefully and you will

find at least some Japanese traits, tastes, and prejudices.

Peter's father was another major factor in his development. Hubert Ludwell was quintessentially a complex late Victorian British and continental gentleman. Hubert was born in England but grew up in the British embassy in Switzerland. He spoke 7 languages as well as different dialects in some of them. In the late 1940s, he was assigned to go to Germany as a Nazi hunter due to his excellent German and continental connections. Hubert always thought of Peter as linguistically regarded. Peter only spoke 4 languages and only one of them, English, was fluent, the rest merely functional. And Peter's French - a mess! " You speak French like a Spanish cow with a bad accent," Hubert said. "Your French is utterly hopeless," he added. Ironically Hubert never lived long enough to hear Peter speak with an exquisite French accent. The secret of his transformation, a World War II French resistance hero told Peter so many interesting true historical stories in French that Peter absorbed an excellent accent by osmosis.

From Hawaii on to a mainland America and then on to an academically excellent boys' high school. Peter started college too but an incident blocked completion.

So then it was on to Germany where his German improved and Viet Nam where Peter learned Vietnamese. " You have a Da Nang accent," Vietnamese born Americans would later tell him. Peter did not talk much about his Viet Nam years. He lost a Vietnamese boy he was going to adopt in a roadside explosion. Peter was awarded a bronze star service metal and severely injured to the point he lapsed into a coma. The doctors wanted to pull the plug and let him die but his mother, the determined R.N., said absolutely no. Peter woke up and was transferred to an Air Force hospital in Colorado for rehabilitation. Peter got into trouble with the nurses there, (as he almost always did in hospitals) for organizing wheelchair races in the corridors. (Ironically wheelchair racing is now a recognized rehabilitation modality.) While in Colorado, Peter learned to be a cowboy, learned theatrical lighting

and how to cook Sicilian style.

And the Viet Nam war, the battles? Peter wouldn't talk about them. "Half my high school graduating class died in Viet Nam," was one of his few comments. He remained bitter about the way he was treated in America when he deplaned on leave in San Francisco.

I do know that he came out with exceptional combat skills. I saw him use them twice. They were like nothing I have ever seen before or since not even in the movies!

Peter believed that you don't brag, and you don't posture. Hubert used to say, "Great power and the ability to kill should only be in the hands of those who don't want it." Peter fit the bill perfectly. Peter believed martial arts are for defense. You use them only when you have to.

So what did Peter do in later civilian life? Part of the time he worked as a paralegal and later got a law license. He was a tribal court liaison officer in one particularly sticky case.

His favorite civilian career was journalism. He progressed from security guard to field producer at one CBS station and turned down a job at another. Peter stayed to help me launch the second part of my career. Together we found ways to make the law help people instead of hurt them. For example, he was the executive officer for a successful 11th hour rescue of a woman whose identity papers had been destroyed from Saigon as the city was falling in 1975.

Peter returned to journalism in the 1990s as the co producer of a small, independent, hard news show. The show's influence belied its size. A major network's writers listened to pick up story ideas and audiences stretched from Afghanistan to New York to Washington, D.C. The show helped kill a particularly draconian anti civil rights bill fielded by the Clinton administration. Assignments took him to Europe where he joined a US delegation to a United Nations permanent commission. Using diplomatic skills learned from his dad, Peter joined closed government to government meetings and private industry

to government meetings. Peter always seemed at home in Germany and Belgium and refreshed by his time there.

Peter never even late in life fell behind on important news. We did early morning news briefings for ourselves using foreign and American news stories, think tank pieces, and original documents and speeches. Peter usually had unique, ingenious, and devious solutions to current international problems.

In Peter's late retired years, he volunteered as security for a homeless help program and handed out food packs to the homeless at a church program. Interestingly, although Peter seemed like a very minor unimportant person in these volunteer jobs, people in trouble would sense his understanding and empathy for human suffering and come to him to tell their stories.

So who was he at core? Perhaps his favorite reading list is the best clue.

Peter was an avid reader of the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, Cicero On Duty, and the Christian Bible in all translations. Peter had a profound belief that God gives every human being a life assignment which we can hear if we listen with our hearts.

We who loved him will miss him forever. Ironically, he had always had a secret ambition to teach history, instead on several occasions he helped to make it.