

Speaker 1: Right at the beginning of our sojourns to Europe in the summer, Peter began to make correspondence with the grandsons of Richard Wagner, Wieland and Wolfgang, who were now running the famous Bayreuth Festival. Bayreuth is a small town in Germany, where Richard Wagner sort of retired in his last years with his wife, Cosima. He retired there, built a theater and then started the Bayreuth Festival. A huge festival performing only Wagner operas in the Summer time.

Getting all the cream of the crop of singers and conductors and stage directors. Wagner had died in Bayreuth. At first his son took over and then his son's sons, Wieland and Wolfgang took over. Wieland was a stage director, a very fine one and one that always looked to new ways and modern ways, to do the Wagner operas and Wolfgang was more the business head. Peter had gotten a connection to write Wieland and Wolfgang letters and was subsequently invited to come to Bayreuth to see the operas and to meet with the brothers.

It was a very profitable meeting. They liked each other. They spoke the same language of course and gradually Peter becomes privy to rehearsals that were off limits to very many people. He also of course went to all the performances he could but it was the rehearsals that were not open to the public and the small gatherings that were private, that were very, very dear to Peter. I remember one time he went alone to a technical rehearsal.

I think it was a ^{Wagner} [inaudible 00:03:10] and Wieland was sitting with him and he was so impressed. We had been used to the metropolitan opera, old scenery. Every leaf in place. Many, many trees when there was a wooden ^{forest scene} ~~wooden~~ scene. Very basic. If there was a wooden scene, you saw many, many trees and leaves and so on. If there was a sea, you saw water. Not with Wieland Wagner. He did so much with lights.

A particular scene that was a wooden scene in ^{Wagner} [Valerie 00:04:01], had hardly a tree, not even a leaf but the lighting was such that Peter said, that you really got the feeling of the trees and even the smell. This was true of many of Wieland's productions. In the '80s and of course, Peter enjoyed being in on these rehearsals and being a sort of a special guest. Bayreuth operated like ^{Wagner} [Glen Brown 00:04:43]. You went to the performance. It started about five o'clock. Since Wagner's operas were pretty long.

It was ^{five} ~~five~~ o'clock, by the time dinner came, it was just the middle of the opera. You broke for dinner and went on the premises to have a very fine meal, which was part of your ticket. Then went back to the enjoy the rest of the opera. A lot of the ~~singers~~ ^{singers}, especially in the early '80s, we knew and enjoyed meeting them again and watching them perform.

In the years after Peter retired from the opera, his health began to fail. He always had had an irregular heart beat but now our doctor, Doctor Love, felt that this was getting worse. The first thing he did, was put in a regulator and put in some sort of regulator that Peter could report in his heart, it was planted in his heart and Peter would report every so often to the doctor to have it checked, to see that this irregularity was under

control.

my wife
In the ~~1960s~~, especially ~~1964~~ '65, in the Summer, our mountain climbing was curtailed. We did a little but we had to do very easy trails. He tired easily and his balance was not very good. In the Winter, we had had done cross country skiing and both of us had loved it. I had never been on skis in my life and I was just delighted with the exercise and the pure joy of sailing down and Peter was quite good at it.

When the ~~1964~~ or '65, he found that he no longer could do this. He was falling too much. That was curtailed also but we still had our New Year's Eves and our Summers and our Bayreuth. In 1994 or 5, 1995, we were still going to Europe but then, by then I was driving most. We rented a car but by 1995 and certainly 1996, Peter's eyes were no longer what they should be, so in the Summers, I was doing all the driving.

In 1996, a friend of ours, a very good friend, Eleanor Moskovitz Procton. Eleanor was the widow of Peter's former concert master, who died quite young of cancer. Eleanor had remarried but ~~unfortunately her husband also only lived ...~~ Her second husband, only lived about seven months. Eleanor was a very good friend of ours and she noticed Peter failing and suggested that we put our name on the waiting list, at a relatively new retirement home called, Friends Home West. *Eleanor*

Sort of the in the adjunct of the much older Friends Home, Guilford. Eleanor had for years been the guitar and singing lady for the elder people regularly. She would go in and sing with them, the old songs and play the guitar and they would have a wonderful time. She also on a much less basis, did some work with the new Friends Home West. She suggested we put our name on the waiting list, before we went away that 1996 Summer.

After many arguments with Peter, he reluctantly agreed and only on the condition that he could take his piano with him. We went away in Summer of 1996 and visited with our friends. Had a very nice Summer and right in the middle, we received a phone call from Friends Home West, that there was a two room apartment available. I answered that we would look at that when we came back, which we did and liked it.

At least I did, Peter was still reluctant but the lady that showed us the apartment, assured him that the acoustics was such, that his piano playing, even if he did it fairly late in the evening, would not disturb the neighbors and that he was absolutely free to bring his piano into the apartment. After much discussion, we decided to take the two room apartment. ~~make~~ *it was* *we made* ~~make~~ the second bedroom Peter's studio, with his grand piano.

We eventually sold the Spinnet. We put the grand piano in the second bedroom, which had his own bathroom and a huge closet and space for all his equipment, all his recordings, all his tapes and he could shut the door and be by himself and he could play the piano up until at least 10 o'clock. I even asked one of my neighbors if this had disturbed her at all and she said smiling, "Not in the least. I can go into one of my bedrooms and put my ear to the wall and listen to a concert and enjoy."

dog shack
we called it

After deliberation, we decided to move in right before Peter's 80th birthday, which we did. It was a humongous move. All this stuff ~~we~~ had been, not only in our house but also in his little studio, his little ~~dog shack~~ flat in the back. We had to find place for everything that was dear to him and put it in his room. A friend of ours, Robert [Levitus 00:13:08], recommended a very nice lady, who on retirement and was a widow, was doing decorating.

She consented to decorate our apartment, which she did for a minimum money and in great taste. Peter's little room, his studio with his grand piano, was done very beautifully in shades of wine and beige and was really quite attractive. We moved four or five days before his birthday but on several visits that Debra had came down, looked out our apartment, we talked about having a dinner in honor of Peter's 80th birthday.

We had invitations printed and at first, we were going to have it there at Friends Home West but it is a Quaker building and Quaker run and they don't allow even wine or any kind of liquor. Our decorator, who belonged to the Starmount Country Club gave us her authorship to take over the dining room and have a celebration of Peter's 80th birthday, which we did, four days after we moved in to Friends Home West. Robin and John came from California.

My sister came from New Orleans and my nieces came from ~~from~~. One of them came from New York. The other one, Joan, couldn't make it but she was there, as she said, in spirit. We had a very, very lovely party. Several well-known people in the music field, Robert Ward, a Pulitzer prize winner for his opera, "The Crucible." Peter Perret, the conductor of the Winston Salem Symphony.

Bodo ~~[Levitus 00:16:21]~~ ^{Sheldon} had taken over when Peter retired from the opera but only for about three or four years, a renowned stage director and a great friend. Sheldon Morgenstern, head of the Eastern Music Festival. Peter had conducted opera there at least one Summer and had some of his own compositions played at the Tuesday night Chamber Music concerts. Sheldon had become a very good friend.

OH
I mean for
grandpa

We had a lovely evening. There were many speeches. Peter did not speak. My sister spoke and I spoke on his behalf. ~~That we had, that at the party, Peter's 80th birthday,~~ of course my daughter and son-in-law were there, with my two and a half year old granddaughter, who made a brief but very conspicuous entrance in a red velvet dress at her ~~Opera's~~ 80th birthday. She was our pride and joy. Now as '96 went to '97, we enjoyed our new home.

We met quite a few people but Peter was resistant in going into the dining room because so many people spoke to him, that his food got cold. I took to going down to the dining room and getting our dinner and bringing it back, so we can eat in front of the television, if necessary or just by ourselves and have some wine. As I said, this was a Quaker building and no wine was served with meals.

I noticed also that there were lapses in Peter's memory and there were also times when

he would wonder. Sometimes it would scare me but it was never too far and I always managed to get him back. There was, before we left our home on [Lipskin 00:19:28] Road, there were several very bad scares, when he would leave his studio and go around in back, especially at night and not be able to find his way back or he'd go out to the mailbox fairly late in the evening, to put mail and not know how to get back. *Separate*

There were some very scary situations there, that I was able to take care of. We were now going into 1998. Peter was still happy with his studio and I was working but by this time, Doctor Love had noticed an irregular heartbeat and he recommended to a heart specialist and he was recommended and Peter was given an apparatus, that he had to report on. That he would go into the office and they would take his measurement of his heartbeat.

It was controllable but it was there. Also Doctor Love was treating him for memory loss and this was more and more scary and I was concerned. By 1998, ~~at~~ Christmas, he had a ... We were going to New York ~~and he had~~ ... We were going to a wedding in the family. My niece's eldest son was getting married to a lovely young lady from New Jersey and they were having the wedding right before Peter and I were flying for our regular visit after Christmas and New Year's and for New Year's with the [Mullers 00:22:04].

That's what we did. We went to the wedding and then left the wedding halfway and took a car to the airport and flew to Vienna. We met with the Mullers. Had a very nice New Year's Eve at [Moveers 00:22:34] with our Italian food. Peter having his spaghetti bolognese, as usual but a few days after New Years ... We were planning to go to Zurich to see Hans and we had tickets to a ballet performance in Zurich.

Peter right after New Year's, I got ill with a cold and he got the cold from me. It turned into pneumonia. We handled it. A few days later, it came back. We with the help of a very nice man at our apartment hotel, [inaudible 00:23:33], we got Peter to the hospital and got him attended to. The second bout, we were told we should go back to United States. We had to abort our Switzerland visit to Hans and get tickets early to the United States. *well/gary
Egler*

We came back and Peter was okay. I mean, I guess the weather in Vienna was ^{just} terribly kind to him. Life went on but I saw him failing in many ways. He was under Doctor Love's supervision and was getting some medicine for memory loss. I was teaching twice a week at night and I was loathe to leave Peter alone, even though I had gotten one of those necklaces that you could attach and phone in, if you had problems but he was loathe to use it.

As his mother had been, his mother had had the same apparatus and she sometimes did not wear it and one time, she was in the bedroom when this necklace was in the kitchen and she fell and broke her hip. Fortunately we visited in time to get her to the hospital. It was the same sort of situation. I would get a babysitter, especially on the two evenings, that I was away teaching. I had some neighbors who would look in on Peter, when I just went out to the grocery or bank or so.

When I left at night for a couple of hours, I wanted to have someone with him. She would sit in our living room with the door closed. Peter would be playing or working on his music and as she said, she loved when he played the piano. It was like getting a free concert. She was a lovely lady. Her name was Carmen and she was a former nurse. I was very, very happy to have her and very lucky to have her. Life went on until May but things were getting worse.

One interim that was very interesting, that shows how entwined our friends were in our life. I had mentioned the name Audrey ~~[Klein 00:27:03]~~ way back, as a wonderful dancer who had been kicked out of the Met unfairly and because I got a second audition, she got a second chance and did beautifully. Became the ballet mistress at the Met and the personal friend and assistance to the great choreographer, Antony Tudor. *Keene*

Audrey Hill
By strange coincidence, she had resigned from the Met after many years and with her husband, ~~[Orin 00:27:41]~~ Hill, who had one time, had been a ballet dancer and my partner at the Met. I even knew him before Audrey did. Then a singer, went to Europe and studied but by that time, he was married with a couple of children and was loathed to stay away from the United States. Of course his wife, Audrey, has this job as ballet mistress.

Debra Devere
He also was a stage manager under a mutual friend, ~~[Bazier Devere 00:28:21]~~, the Belgium stage director from the Met, who had stepped in and helped me get the permission from Edward Johnson, to stay in a room with my new husband, on the Met tour. All these things came back. We had them as visitors. By luck, we found out that they were living just three and a half hours from us. Sneads Ferry in North Carolina. *RM*

Bill Beck
They would come and we did a Tails of Hoffmann, when Peter was still conducting and they they came and saw the opera and he had a wonderful visit in Winston-Salem with one of the singers. They were in and out of our lives. Unfortunately Orin died very suddenly but Audrey and I, to this day, are the very best of friends. As I said, May 1998, Memorial Day, Peter had had several falls and this particular day, he fell and it was difficult for him to get up and for me to handle it.

I picked up the phone and called healthcare. They came up with a wheelchair and took him down. Of course Doctor Love came in. Debra was notified and the outcome was, that Doctor Love had taken him to the hospital fairly late one night and made several tests. Then he faced Debra and me and he said, "I will now say that Peter definitely has Alzheimer's. It has been on my mind but I did not want to make any kind of statement, until I was sure."

Of course there were questions, "How long would it be?" The disease was debilitating, as we all know and there was really no cure. "How long would it take?" Doctor Love said, "It depends on the patient." I then asked him, "How will I know when it was becoming near the end?" He said, "Usually Alzheimer's patients either have renal failure or the lungs stop working." 1998, Peter was put into healthcare at Friends Home West and never got out.

One year before I have to say, his heart specialist suggested that we have a pacemaker put in and we did. He stayed out at healthcare. That was in 1996. He had a pacemaker, two years before he went into healthcare but now he was in healthcare. Of course I went down to see him, at least once or more likely, twice a day. The memory loss was getting absolutely horrendous. He hardly recognized me and for the first year or so, they did not let him walk.

He couldn't use a walker because he would let go and fall. His mind did not work like some people's does when they can use a walker. About two years into his staying at the Friends Home West healthcare, a wonderful orderly, by the name of RC, decided that he would help Peter and he got him up to walk and it succeeded. RC would hold onto the back of Peter's trousers and walk with him through the halls and Peter was so proud of himself.

RC sometimes said it was almost like the President of the United States saying, hello to the different people that he passed by. We were very grateful to RC, always will be and he's still around today. That he at least got Peter on his feet, where he could get at least some walking ~~not every alone~~ with with the right kind of attention. In 2004, we had had a special long-term agreement, where I did get money every month but that only ran till four years.

At the end of that four years, was 2004 and we had to move to a less expensive quarters and that was in Friends Home Guilford. They were still in their old building and Peter had a roommate but two years after he moved or three years, they finally built a new building and Peter had a semi-private room. This was already 2006 or the latter half of 2005. I visited Peter every day ~~when, of course~~, when he was in Friends Home Guilford, it was only a matter of a short drive.

I never missed a day and sometimes twice a day. Only when I went to Europe, one time to see the Mullers and to have one more New Year's Eve. The New Year's Eve where we were at the restaurant, sitting at a table for four, with three people but remembering the empty chair. I did not see Hans that time but I spoke to him on the phone. There were also two more visits, that I made. One was to, I took a short cruise from Miami to the Bahamas, just three days. ~~To see the former dancer of the rock of y~~ *Muriel Page was not*

Then came back and flew to Naples, to visit my dear friend, Muriel Page, me, Eva Gardener, the former star of the vaudeville that was my first job and my mother was her assistant and she loved my mother like a real mother. Muriel was 83 at the time and a few months later, she passed away. I was so glad to be able to visit with her before her demise. Also I went on a short cruise to Nova Scotia.

Peter had been in contact with a former conductor, George ... I can't remember his last name but I will look it up. He and his wife were in Nova Scotia and he had become quite a well known conductor and had been in touch with Peter for years, before Peter went into any kind of healthcare. Then I remained telephone friends with his wife after he died. I went to visit Debra in New York and then went on a short cruise to Nova Scotia

and had a very wonderful day with his widow, this conductor's widow.

We met and spent the day together. The ship was in dock and then I came back to New York. Outside of those trips, everyday until Peter's demise on March 24th, 2007. It was his lungs were given out. During his stay at Guilford, the Friends Home in Guilford, who had a most wonderful doctor, Lynn [Shaddock 00:39:46], a lovely woman doctor. She was wonderful with Peter and especially when the end came near, Debra took off from her job, came down to be with me.

We were there at the end and Lynn helped a great deal because we forced the end. Peter was not breathing correctly. He was having episodes and Lynn suggested that we just, as they say, pull the plug, which is exactly what we did on March 26th, 2007. I had lost my husband of 57 years but in reality, I hadn't really had the Peter that I knew, for at least 10 years. It started. We decided we'd have a semi-private service here at Friends Home West.

I almost immediately got a phone call from the paper and Debra gave them an interview and the result was a very nice article, as well as of course, the regular obituary. There also subsequently appeared in the ~~Bayreuth~~ paper an obituary and also in Beaumont, Texas, where Peter had been for years, ^{ahead of the opera.} A very nice tribute and a picture. As soon as the news got out, our living room looked like a florist shop and then the letters began coming, letters of condolences. *Baton Rouge*

Soon, I began getting letters from all around the country and even in Europe. I also got many on the internet, that read of Peter's demise and his former pupils and people he had been associated with, all in glowing terms. Here in Greensboro about a week after he passed away, the city council called me and said they wanted to give him a citation. Invited me to come to a meeting and I went with my good friend, Stephanie Cordick, who at that time, was still with the symphony.

Later on, she became Executive Secretary of Eastern Music Festival. The city council gave both a citation and a speech accrediting Peter with contribution so heavily to the arts in Greensboro. Here were all then the letters, the personal letters that I got and I said, from all over the world, made me sad to think that this man never realized that he had made a major contribution to music in general and opera and symphony in particular.

He was nowhere near a failure. My life went on. We had a semi-private service at which quite a few people spoke very complimentary. Arturo, my son-in-law was not able to come but he sent a wonderful letter with hints of his wonderful sense of humor. I spoke briefly and my daughter made a beautiful speech, Debra. She started on quote, "You can not choose your father but in my case, I hit jackpot." Of course, that was the trigger for many tears.

As I said, my husband was gone but he had been gone quite a few years before that. My life went on. He was cremated and I received the urn that we had bought and Debra received a smaller box with the ashes and I also had a smaller box with the ashes. I'd

entertain the thought of going to Europe once more and carrying out Peter's wish, of having some of this ashes at least, spread over his beloved Austrian Alps, the [Tieron 00:46:22] but I never was able to realize that ambition. I continued to work.

The atmosphere at the ballet, was deteriorating. The recession had taken its toll and the moral was very low. I had been teaching some of the classes of the older girls but I ... That was reduced and I was teaching just steadily twice a week, Wednesdays and Thursdays, the adult class. The first one was the medium dancers and the Thursday was the beginners.

I loved teaching and especially teaching the medium class, where some of my old students and some new ones, who had been dancers before. Had taken quite a few lessons and then ...

This is my life as I remember it - all I can say it's been a wonderful journey and as I recall so many remarkable incidents of good fortune I can only mirror my mother's observation "I truly have the luck of the Irish"