



by Jan Eric Peterson

Brian and I grew up together from about age five in Pasco, Washington. The son of Dr. A.M. Putra, M.D., and school teacher Mabel Stromme Putra, of Polish and Scandinavian ancestry, he was brought up right. Ever proper and polite, strictly Catholic, small town values of hard work, good neighbor, loyal friend.

At Pasco High School, he excelled academically and was senior class president '62. At college he achieved a B.A. in psychology from Gonzaga University and then a J.D. from Hastings College of Law, where he made Law Review, and, in what he described as the coldest, most miserable winter of his life, an LLM in tax from Boston University. But better than Vietnam. We studied for the bar exam together in what we described as the worst summer of our lives and joined the Washington State Bar in 1969.

Obituaries

Brian Anthony Putra, Trial Lawyer, 1944-2009

Brian got a job as an associate at what was then Trethaway & Brink and put his tax expertise to use as a cooperating attorney for the ACLU. In 1972, at his tenth high school class reunion, he rekindled his relationship with his high school girlfriend and married Marie, a union that produced his two wonderful children, Sarah, a school psychologist, and Jay, an ICU nurse. He is also survived by his sister Mary, a retired legal assistant, and two granddaughters.

Through all these years, Brian and I had always been best friends and each other's best man. In 1975 he joined a fledgling firm that became Peterson, Bracelin, Young & Putra, where he thrived until his recent untimely death.

Brian was a very successful and respected lawyer. He was an ethics expert and former chairman of the Washington State Bar Association's Disciplinary Board. Over the years he engaged in a broad array of legal arenas, representing small businesses, professional licensing, employment law, arbitrations. But his greatest work was as a plaintiff's trial lawyer, especially in complex medical negligence and product liability cases. He had numerous seven-figure verdicts and settlements to his credit. His secrets to success were meticulous preparation and hard work, attention to detail, never underestimating or disrespecting an opponent, and really caring about the clients.

Brian never stopped learning. He had been

a tireless vice president for WSAJ's CLE program for many years. Brian was a generous supporter in time and money to WSAJ. He was an original EAGLE member. To quote Larry Shannon, WSAJ Legislative Director:

In the late 80's and early 90's, when I was fairly new, and our organization was trying very hard just to literally survive, Brian put his fertile mind to work in an incredible and tireless fashion to put together world class CLE's. He was also tireless in his constant fundraising efforts, all crammed in around his busy practice. These twin activities were truly instrumental in keeping our organization alive, and then allowing us to thrive.

I had the great pleasure of traveling with him to many corners of the state, including most of Eastern Washington, and seeing many of you and signing some of you up as EAGLEs. He always took any phone call with humor and patience, and thoughtful advice. And in his quiet droll manner, he was amazingly funny. He was very generous with his time and ample abilities. He will truly be missed.

My partner of 35 years, my best friend for 60. A great lawyer, a better friend.

Jan Eric Peterson, WSAJ EAGLE member, is a founding partner of Peterson Young Putra in Seattle, and is a Past-President of both WSAJ and the WSBA.