



ON THE FRONT COVER

FRITS VERHOEVEN

By Brenton Kenny, Q.C.

Frits Verhoeven is the new president of the B.C. branch of the Canadian Bar Association after serving in various other CBA positions since 1999.

Frits is a partner and a senior litigator at Edwards, Kenny & Bray LLP. He has appeared in a wide range of civil lawsuits and administrative proceedings since his call to the bar in 1983. Probably his two best-known appearances were as counsel for the former president and CEO of B.C. Hydro in a successful lawsuit against B.C. Hydro for wrongful dismissal, and as counsel for the plaintiff in the leading case of *Athey v. Leonati* (1996), 140 D.L.R. (4th) 235 (S.C.C.), in which the Supreme Court of Canada restated the principles of causation in the law of tort.

It was during the *Athey* case that Frits demonstrated to me his scholarship and determination. He was convinced of the correctness of his view of the law of causation as it applied to his client. He aggressively pursued the appeal process all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, where the court unanimously agreed with his position as put forward by Tom Berger, whom he retained and junioried in that court.

Frits was born in Vlaardingen in the Netherlands in 1956. Each of his parents had endured the Second World War under trying circumstances, to say the least. With the Cold War raging and continuing insecurity in Holland, it is not surprising that his parents decided to relocate with their children to Canada. At the age of two, Frits, his two sisters and their parents arrived in Montreal by boat. Then it was on to a CPR train (colonist class—wooden seats only), whose planned route was across Canada. Ignoring the suggestions of Canadian Immigration Department officers that they disembark at London, Ontario or Winnipeg—“everyone is on strike

in Vancouver”, Frits’s mother recalls an officer telling her—they rode to the end of the line, where they found that the officer’s comment was true.

The family moved to Richmond (then known as Lulu Island) after a year in Vancouver. Frits has resided there ever since, now with Kathy, his wife of 25 years, and their four children.

Frits had a variety of summer and winter jobs while in high school and university. His first job was as a 16-year-old, manning the deep fryers in the fish and chip concession at Second Beach in Stanley Park. His most vivid recollection was getting splattered constantly with fat in the intense heat while watching others having a great time playing in the water and sunshine. After that came work as a short-order cook at the White Spot, as a general clerk at Safeway and as a photographer, chiefly taking pictures of houses for the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver. Perhaps partially influenced by his memories of his previous employment, Frits rates being a lawyer as the best job he’s ever had. He enjoys it thoroughly, and it shows.

His strong interest in hockey started in 1965, when he enrolled as a minor hockey player in Richmond. He has played hockey on and off ever since, always, as he says, “with little effectiveness but with great enjoyment”. He has been a minor hockey coach for the past ten years and now plays in a “beer league” for a team named the Avalanche, whose motto is “We’re going downhill, fast.”

Other interests include listening to jazz and blues—it’s amazing how often a walk after lunch ends up at a music store—chocolate, red wine, historical biographies and crime novels.

Frits tackles every task with enthusiasm, dedication and intelligence, as well as with a wry sense of humour that never fails him, no matter how trying the circumstances. These qualities will ensure a very successful term as president, both for Frits and the CBABC, I am sure.



F. Andrew Schroeder and Monique Pongracic-Speier are pleased to announce that effective January 1, 2007, they are entering into partnership as **Schroeder Speier, Barristers & Solicitors**, with **Arnold P. Berry** as Associate Counsel to the firm.

Schroeder Speier will continue the practice of **Schroeder & Company** in the areas of complex civil litigation, appellate advocacy, labour and employment, personal injury, constitutional and administrative law.

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Barristers & Solicitors

#1119-808 Nelson Street • Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2H2 • Tel: 604-688-6737 • Fax: 604-688-0271