



Gary L.F. Somers, Q.C.

On June 24, 2016, the legal community lost one of its most respected and dynamic members, Gary Somers, Q.C. Gary passed away suddenly after a short illness and it is with heavy hearts that we announce his passing.

Gary was a true son of New Westminster, being born and raised in that city. His grandparents were the owners and operators of the Terminal Pub (a New Westminster original) that still stands today. Gary lost his father at a young age. He did not let that



stand in his way, however, of pursuing and completing his law degree from the University of British Columbia in 1969.

After being called to the British Columbia bar in 1970, Gary became counsel for the Superintendent of Child and Family Services. In addition, Gary was on the Assize with Mr. Justice Hinds. In 1973, Gary served on the Royal Commission of Family Law under Mr. Justice Berger.

In 1980, Gary started his own law firm, Somers and Company in New Westminster where he practised and continued to be a thoughtful and contributing member until his passing. For 45 years, Gary continued his work as counsel for the Superintendent of Family and Child Service and then as counsel for the Director of Child, Family and Community Services. Gary shaped much of the child protection law in British Columbia. His legacy will live on through the many published and often quoted decisions in this area of the law.

Gary was also a most trusted counsel for the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia for over 30 years. He was respected by ICBC and by members of the insurance bar as a whole. Gary was always collegial with plaintiff's counsel who were always collegial back (even when their clients were being impeached by Gary's very skilled cross examination). Indeed, Gary was a true believer in the rule of law, procedural fairness, and the integrity of the adversarial system.

Gary's firm has grown to over 20 lawyers which includes his sons, Scott and Matthew. Gary was known to show his appreciation to his staff by leaving eclectic and meaningful gifts on their desks. He valued his health and embraced and shared new trends whether it was through articles he found on the Internet or a new type of bottled water. Gary kept the office candy bowl stocked and you could often find him holding morning coffee meetings at the neighbouring IHOP restaurant.

Gary was a forward thinker in ensuring that women stayed in the practice of law. He truly understood the challenges of simultaneously raising children and practising law. He created a firm with flexibility to accommodate parents resulting in a very loyal and appreciative legal staff. Gary was rarely seen in court without his legal assistant, Debbie, who worked at his side for 36 years.

Gary served as a bencher of the Law Society from 1984 to 1995 and participated in numerous committees, including acting as chair of the Discipline Committee. He was honoured by being appointed a life bencher and Queen's Counsel.

Gary had a unique personal style as evidenced by his extensive collection of vintage cowboy boots and vintage cars. Gary's arrival in the parking lot

of the law office in his car and cowboy boots prompted the receptionist to announce to his assistant: "the Eagle has landed."

If you were lucky enough to know Gary, you would have heard one of his many stories about the characters he met along the way in our legal profession—the profession he loved and served. He was a very spiritual person and embraced both traditional and modern practices. Gary spoke with fondness about his experiences on Haida Gwaii and could be found smudging the law office to clear away any negative energy.

Gary loved playing golf and was a member of the Vancouver Golf Club for 60 years. On June 28, 2016, the Vancouver Golf Club flew its flag at half mast in honour of Gary. The Vancouver Golf Club was where Gary proposed to his beloved wife, Sharlyne, in front of one the fireplaces. Forty-three years later, Gary's firm held a celebration of his life in front of the same fireplace. The firm was honoured to have Sharlyne in attendance at the celebration.

The world is less interesting without Gary Somers. He will be missed by many.

Madeline Hall

