



Edward James Freeland 1912-1999

E.J. Freeland, benefactor, dead at 86

Businessman instrumental in creating new town centre

FORT ERIE — E.J. Freeland, perhaps best known for donating 19 acres of land worth more than \$1 million to the Town of Fort Erie for its new municipal complex, has died. He was 86.

The feisty businessman, legendary for loaning his employees money in hard times, built the one-man brokerage business he founded after the

Second World War into an international group of businesses including PBB Global Logistics and PBB Travel Services just to name a few.

Today, PBB employs more than 1,000 people in 70 offices across North America.

Never one to succumb to greed, Freeland became the benefactor of dozens of area students who would have been unable to attend post-secondary institutions had it not been for his gen-



FREELAND

erous scholarship program.

In recent years, he worked to forge the Edward J. Freeland Foundation, an organization designed to direct the monies of his estate to local charities such as the kidney and multiple sclerosis societies.

Just three months ago, Freeland was honoured during a brief ceremony at the Fort Erie Leisureplex during which a plaque recognizing his invaluable contribution to the creation of the civic centre complex was unveiled.

Edward J. Freeland: dreamer,

MIKE ROBINSON
THE TIMES

One of Fort Erie's leading citizens died at the age of 86 last week, leaving behind a legacy of hard work, vision and philanthropy.

Edward James Freeland died at his Niagara Boulevard home Tuesday following a bout with cancer. A private funeral service was held yesterday at Williams Funeral Home in Ridgeway, but a public memorial service is planned for Sept. 9, 11 a.m. at the Garrison Road United Brethren Church in Fort Erie.

Flags at town hall and at Fort Erie's Holiday Inn were lowered to half mast following Freeland's death, a fitting tribute to the man whose vision is responsible for the new municipal centre and many other projects and organizations within town.

"The stories are legion of the various projects or activities or individuals assisted by Mr. Freeland from time to time," Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop said. "However it was his vision, generosity and encouragement which provided the catalyst for construction of Fort Erie's magnificent municipal centre. At a time when most people in Fort Erie were failing to see the forest for the trees,

Mr. Freeland envisioned a civic complex which would become the focal point for what he believed would become an invigorated, united and thriving municipality."

The hotel was the final piece of Freeland's vision for the 18 acres of land he donated to the town and the last major contribution on a long list that began when he came to town in 1940, with his wife Dawn. After serving two years in the Royal Canadian Air Force, as an air gunner, Freeland worked at Woolworth's and sold insurance in town before founding the Peace Bridge Brokerage in 1946. That company, which began with one man and a dream, now employs more than 1,000 people in 70 offices throughout North America.

"All of us who had the privilege of working with E.J. at PBB, or on the many community projects he spearheaded, will remember him fondly for his advice, respect and encouragement," PBB vice president Val Beattie said. "His generosity, both public and private, has changed many lives."

The list of Freeland's accomplishments is far too long to fully explore, but highlights, in addition to what's been mentioned above, include establishing the Fort Erie Kinsmen Club, serving as the

Kinsmen national vice president and president and being a founding member of the Canadian Institute of Customs House Brokers, known today as the Canadian Society of Customs Brokers. He's been honoured by Fort Erie's Rotary Club with a Paul Harris Fellowship and, through the E.J. Freeland Foundation, many of Fort Erie's young business minds have been able to attend Brock University thanks to two annual four-year scholarships.

Freeland was also largely responsible for building the YMCA in town that bears his name. Lois Barker, manager of the Y, said that in 1987 when the idea of a Fort Erie YMCA was being considered, organizers were thrilled when Freeland agreed to serve as chairman of the building committee.

"We knew that things would be done right," Barker said. "He brought to the committee his vision for the town, his belief that the people in our town deserve the very best, his commitment to excellence and, through the long hours and hard work during the building project, his wonderful sense of humour.

"We were indeed honoured that Mr. Freeland agreed to allow us to name the building after him," she continued. "He gave of his time, talent and treasure, not for personal recognition, but for his personal sense of responsibility to people and our town."

That sentiment was echoed time and again by Freeland's friends and associates last week. Erie-Lincoln MP John Maloney said Fort Erie has lost a great citizen, "a man whose drive and vision have helped forge the fabric of the community.

"He was blessed with boundless energy and had a singular, unassuming style that was unforgettable," Maloney said. "He will be sorely missed."

Erie-Lincoln MPP Tim Hudak called Freeland the "consummate businessman" and "consummate





Edward James Freeland's visions and dreams for Fort Erie came to life in many ways, including the hotel he's shown with above, to the concrete and steel of the Leisureplex, YMCA and the town hall, below left, where flags flew at half mast in tribute last week.

philanthropist."

"He showed a boundless community spirit," Hudak said. "He advanced causes in education, recreation and a series of causes for the less fortunate. He stands as a giant in Fort Erie's development and history."

On the way to his committal Thursday, Freeland's casket was driven past PBB's head office on Walnut Street, one final time, offering a chance for long-time friends and employees to say goodbye.

Few men have had such an impact on Fort Erie in the past century, Mayor Redekop said, and

Freeland is among those that will never be forgotten.

"Fort Erie has been the fortunate recipient of exceedingly generous gifts over the past century. One thinks of Dr. William O. Douglas, or Alonzo C. Mather, or Sir Harry Oakes," Redekop said. "And, of course, Edward J. Freeland. His contributions to our community will never be forgotten, nor will he. I know that I join all of those who knew him in celebrating his life of incomparable accomplishments, while mourning his unfortunate death. While he may now be gone from our presence physically, his spirit will forever remain among us."

In Remembrance
E.J. Freeland
1912-1999

11:00am

September 9th, 1999

The Leisureplex, Fort Erie, Ontario

Prelude

Welcome & Opening remarks

*Mr. Ken Chalmers
Personal Counsel to Mr. Freeland*

Invocation & Opening Prayer

Congregational Hymn "Amazing Grace"

(See back of bulletin)

Scripture readings: Psalm 46:1-7
St. John 14:1-6

Solo "The 23rd Psalm"

Gloria Nevinger

Tributes

Valerie Beattie
Executive Vice-President PBB Global Logistics
Paul Fell
Chairperson Edward J. Freeland Foundation
Doug Martin
Regional Councillor - Town of Fort Erie
His Worship Wayne Redekop
Mayor - Town of Fort Erie

"The Way of the Cross"

His Signature Singers

Scripture reading: Micah 6:6-8

Homily

The Rev. Dr. Walter Winger

"We shall see Jesus"

His Signature Singers

Prayers

Benediction

Postlude

Some people only look at life through eyes that seldom gleam
while others look beyond today as they're guided by a dream
And the dreamers can't be sidetracked by dissenters who
may laugh

for only they alone can know how special is their path

But dreams aren't captured easily,

there's much work before you're through

but the time and efforts are all worthwhile

when the impossible comes true

And dreams have strength in numbers

for when a common goal is shared

the once impossible comes true because of all who cared

And once it's seen reality a dream has just begun

for magically from dreams come dreams

and a walk becomes a run

But with growth of course comes obstacles

and with obstacles comes fear

but the dream that is worth dreaming

finds its way to the clear

And the dream continues growing

reaching heights before unseen

and it's all because of the courage of the dreamers

and their dream



Edward James Freeland

1912 - 1999