

A TRIBUTE TO JAKE WARREN, O.C., LL.D

AT A SERVICE IN HIS MEMORY

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It has been written that “he is the greatest who is often in men’s good thoughts.” By this measure, our departed friend, Jake Warren, achieved greatness in life just as today he summons in death our love and a cascade of fond memories.

Joan, Hilary, Jennifer, Martin, Ian, and all members of the Warren family -- I am honoured indeed to speak today of what Canada meant to Jake and what Jake meant to Canada; and as well, if I may, of what Jake meant to me and my wife Susan.

Jack Hamilton Warren made his debut in 1921 on a tobacco farm here in Ontario. Raised and educated in Ottawa, he went off to Queen’s University, an institution that he spoke of with affection all his life. He was, after all, a “Queen’s man” through and through.

As the dark clouds of war and the threat of tyranny descended upon Europe and the world, the restless and adventuresome Warren volunteered to serve his country. After a stint at Royal Roads, the newly-minted naval officer went to sea.

A very young man he was to be sure, but he could never forget -- never wanted to forget -- the terror of finding himself fighting for survival in the frigid North Atlantic when his ship, HMCS Valleyfield, was torpedoed in 1944. He and 35 others survived, 124 did not.

Jake would tell the story of being picked up and being placed among the bodies of the dead. Whether apocryphal or not, he swore it was a whiff of rum which caused him to twitch, and so be reclaimed by the rescuers from among the dead.

I believe that those whom fate chooses to survive such experiences, when all around do not, can form an unshakeable resolve to make their lives worthwhile. I believe that Jake’s life is evidence of a man with such resolve.

I first heard of Jake when I was working as a young staffer in the office of Prime Minister Trudeau in 1969. Having started his public service career among the best and the brightest at the Department of External Affairs, Jake was already a star Deputy Minister, skillfully managing the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

This seasoned and much respected public servant with strong leadership and negotiating skills was soon to be on the move again. In 1971, the Prime Minister appointed Jake High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. He, Joan and the four children took up residence at the elegant premises on Upper Brook Street. Susan and I were living in London at the time and it was there that our lasting friendship began. We marveled at the consummate skill, always with a down-to-earth Canadian touch, that Jake and Joan brought to their diplomatic responsibilities.

Let me digress from chronology for a moment to tell you how the British attachment remained intact. It was a quintessential Ottawa summer day many years later and the British Foreign Minister, Douglas Hurd, and his wife were visiting. Lunch was at the cottage at White Pine. A paddle on the pristine lake was in order before lunch -- especially as in those low-tech days the only spot from which Mr. Hurd could contact Downing Street was from a rock in the middle of the lake.

At lunch, Jake was finding it difficult to capture the attention of his unruly guests -- so in his inimitable style he climbed on one of the tables and from that more commanding position delivered his customary welcome and tributes with great panache! I expect that upon his return to England, Mr. Hurd recounted with gusto his uniquely Canadian experience.

From the Court of Saint James, the Warrens were posted to Washington in 1975. There, in the epicenter of the World's greatest power, Jake won the respect of the leading lights in the Administration and the Congress. He was in his element. He could talk with authority about economics and trade. His European experience provided him with a solid grasp of transAtlantic issues. Americans liked his frankness. Upon meeting Jake, a well-placed American remarked to me: "I am impressed by your Ambassador. He says what he means, and he means what he says."

In 1977, Jake took up his final post in Canada's public service as Ambassador and Canadian Coordinator of the Tokyo Round of World Trade Negotiations. He was able at last to concentrate all of his skills and experience on a subject for which he had an enduring passion -- international trade. Indeed, the rest of his life he remained a robust defender of open economies and the rule of law in international commerce.

Jake left the public service in 1979 and quickly took on new challenges. The Bank of Montreal successfully wooed him to the post of Vice-Chairman and for a time "Mr. Ambassador" matched wits with the captains of the financial world.

His assignment at the Bank concluded and the North American free trade negotiations underway, Jake was drafted by the Government of Quebec as the Province's Free Trade Policy Advisor. Once again, he was immersed in a subject of lifelong interest.

In the past few minutes, I have endeavoured to trace the remarkable journey of our friend Jake Warren through more than a half century of distinguished service to Canada -- service that led to his entry into the Order of Canada as long ago as 1982.

But what lies behind the high offices, the many achievements, the many honours? The Warren family has offered us precious insights.

We who are assembled here at historic Saint Bartholomew's in respect of this man, can add our voices. We know a Jake who was deeply dedicated to Joan, his partner of 55 years; Joan, an extraordinary individual in her own right, combining intelligence and grace, a source of inspiration and unshakeable support to her family.

We know a Jake who loved and took great pride in his children: Hilary, Martin, Jennifer, Ian; their partners; and his grandchildren.

We know a Jake who was an outspoken patriot, a man with a burning love of our great country. Over the years, he took a strong interest in virtually every issue that came to define Canada as we passed into the new century: our trading relationships with the world; our fiscal health; our constitutional debates; relations between English and French speaking people (*il était un vrai ami du Québec*); our partnership with the United States; the integrity and accountability of our political leaders.

Jake's keen interest in the great issues of the day was much in evidence at the weekly meetings over a span of more than twenty years of the Round Table at the Rideau Club. Members of the Round Table, well represented here today, know that we could always count on vivid, pointed, and wise interventions from our friend. Jake attended his last meeting of the Round Table short weeks ago.

Among Jake's endearing qualities, his loyalty to his friends and colleagues stands out. Ever attentive, ever caring, he could be counted on to give support to one in need of help or in failing health. And when an old friend left this world, he was always there to offer a salute and words of comfort to those left behind. Only weeks ago, in a weakened state himself, Jake was present to say a final farewell to his old friend, Simon Reisman.

Jake embraced life's pleasures. He was, as we know, an enthusiastic gardener who together with Joan transformed an unforgiving landscape at Ironwood into a garden most pleasing to the eye.

He loved time spent in pursuit of the trout at White Pine and the noble salmon in Labrador. On one occasion as we prepared to embark on an expedition to the Sandhill River, he invited me to join him at one of the Rideau Club's billiard tables. There, using the table as an imagined salmon pool, he laid out his strategy for enticing the elusive salmon to his fly.

Jake, need I say, was also a bon vivant -- one who took immense pleasure in good conversation, in the hunt for mushrooms, in a fine meal and a good wine -- often at his beloved Les Fougères. On Remembrance Day last year, he insisted on braving the chilly ceremony at the National Cenotaph before he and Joan joined me and Susan for lunch which included Simon Reisman, Gordon Robertson and other old friends. A special bottle of wine was uncorked for the occasion. Jake took an appreciative sip, the colour returned to his cheeks, and quoting John Keats, he remarked "Wine is only sweet to happy men."

We have all watched Jake struggle in recent weeks and months. Never complaining, he did so in a manner worthy of the observation that "valour is stability, not of legs and arms, but of courage and the soul."

And so, in final farewell to this man today, I choose Tennyson, knowing that former naval officer Jack Hamilton Warren was moved by these lines and would, I believe, regard them as appropriate valediction.

Sunset and evening star,
 And one clear call for me!
 And may there be no moaning of the bar,
 When I put out to sea.

Twilight and evening bell,
 And after that the dark!
 And may there be no sadness of farewell,
 When I embark.