

Alan Hugh Lester

Alan passed away peacefully on September 13, 2021, with his beloved wife, Evelyn, by his side. He is survived by his sister, Barbara, his brother Geoffrey, his children Timothy (Debs), Matthew (Gayle), Diana (Stewart), Sally (Bob), and Jennifer (Terry), grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Alan was born in Birmingham, England on May 3, 1927. He spent his early childhood in Tsingtao, Shandong Province, China, then Tientsin, before being sent, at the age of 6, to the China Inland Mission boarding school in Chefoo. Here, his talent for painting was recognized and encouraged and painting in watercolours became a lifelong pursuit.

In the Autumn of 1941, just prior to the Japanese invasion in the Pacific, Alan left China with his mother, his brother, and his sister. On the way to Canada, they were stranded in the Philippines and subsequently interned at a Japanese prisoner of war camp for two years. With his sketch book and watercolour paints Alan was able to supplement the meagre rations in exchange for paintings of life in the camp.

An unexpected prisoner exchange allowed Alan and his family to come to Canada where he did two years of high school in four months and found work as an architectural draughtsman for a few months before moving to England. Here he joined the Royal Air Force. He served in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf, painting and sketching whenever he had the opportunity. In 1945 Alan was awarded a General Service Medal for service in Palestine.

Alan has said, "The world I grew up in has disappeared without a trace, but it was in many ways, an interesting one." Somewhat of an understatement from a man who climbed, alone, to the top of the great pyramid of Giza to look out over the shimmering desert in one direction and the green Nile valley

in the other, who drove across the Sinai Desert, rode a camel, and explored the bazaars and labyrinthine streets of Baghdad, who made long train journeys and ocean voyages, who survived childhood polio as well as a severe case of dysentery at the age of 3, who in winter rode for miles on frozen irrigation channels on a sampan mounted on runners ('Pidza') to go ice skating and have a winter picnic with his family, who ate toffee pulled straight from a cauldron.

Returning to Canada he pursued his training as an architect and, after completing his registration, ran a branch office before going to Toronto to gain additional experience in a large office. He then emigrated to Australia and worked in Sydney for several years before coming back to Victoria to form a partnership with an old friend. Their firm, Peterson & Lester Architects, operated successfully until his retirement. Alan's designs were widely respected and became an integral part of the architectural landscape of Victoria. Alan was also an active member of the community and served on advisory planning committees and on the board of the Maritime Museum. He donated many of his paintings to various community fundraising events and projects.

Alan met Evelyn, the love of his life, on the bus that they both rode each day to work. He plucked up the courage to ask her out and they were married two years later. They shared 70 devoted years together and their close-knit family was central to their lives.

Alan was a superb artist and enjoyed painting exclusively in watercolours. He sold his works regularly, both in galleries and privately, in the Victoria area. Alan's paintings are held in private collections in Canada, the United States, England, and many other parts of the world.

Alan suffered a stroke in 2017 which resulted in almost complete vision loss. After recovering in hospital and returning home he resumed painting. His paintings of this

period are smaller and more abstract in style to accommodate his vision loss. They are treasured by his family.

Alan lived long and lived well. He loved and was loved.

“There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning.”

—from The Bridge of San Luis Rey—

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

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