



August 26, 2008

By Graham Hicks

LEGENDARY HOTELIER NEVER REALLY RETIRED — The man who gave us Stage West went on to found Canadian Western Bank

CHANCE TO SEE THE BUSINESS GROW

When someone dies late in life, most of their contemporaries are gone, their accomplishments long forgotten.

Eugene Pechet, who died early Saturday morning at 91, was a lucky man.

The legendary hotelier had the good fortune to see the family business grow, not only by his son Howard, but also by his grandsons Jason and David.

Eugene never really "retired." After he turned the family's hotel business (some 26 hotels were bought and sold, with the flagship Mayfield Inn and Stage West Dinner Theatre opening in 1974) to Howard in the early 1980s, he went on to found the Canadian Western Bank, the Manor Cafe, a local House of Pancakes and the Regency Hotel.

"Until his late 80s, dad went to the office at 9:30 a.m., had lunch at the House of Pancakes, was at the Manor Cafe by 2 p.m. and home by 3:30 p.m." says Howard.

Eugene, an Edmontonian since 1928, was enjoying watching the latest expansion of Stage West Hospitality under his grandsons, including hotels, dinner theatres and casino interests in Medicine Hat, Camrose, Canmore, Calgary and Toronto. (Stage West Hospitality plans on opening again in Edmonton.)

Until his heart attack, Eugene had been healthy both mentally and physically. He passed away unexpectedly some 16 hours before the Pechet family and friends gathered at Stage West Calgary to celebrate Howard's 60th.

"We went ahead," says Howard, "knowing Eugene would have insisted. It was as much a tribute to my father as a birthday."