



The Advocate

Peg Buckmaster English would like you to know that, contrary to an item once posted on this website, she is not only not dead but quite full of life, eager to reacquaint with classmates and participate actively in planning and carrying out future class activities. Peg, who over the years lived in England, Illinois, Oregon, and California, had lost touch with classmates after the 10-year class reunion, but happened one day to come across a notice about the 2014 picnic in a local newspaper. Checking out the website, Peg was at first startled, then amused, to find her name listed among the deceased. Deciding it was high time for a resurrection, Peg attended the picnic and reintroduced herself to classmates in what turned out to be a joyful experience. "I was overwhelmed at how welcoming and gracious everyone was upon seeing me again," Peg says. "I am impressed with how open and warm our class is."

So what had Peg been doing besides not being dead for the past 30-plus years? Advocating for others. "Advocacy has been a common thread for me," says Peg. "Advocating for women to get a fair shake in the judicial system, for women to go for the things they think are out of reach, advocacy for children to live safely, advocacy for employees trying to earn a living in a dysfunctional and stressful work environment. It is a theme in all areas of my life, not just in my work life. Rather than enable, I facilitate, point, and nudge."

Her first role as a professional advocate began in 1982, when she took a job as executive director of a new domestic violence shelter in DeKalb, IL, after having completed her Master's degree in London in 1981. Prior to that, until her marriage ended in 1980, Peg had been a "corporate wife," helping her husband to make partner at Price Waterhouse by conducting social events and dinner parties for clients and colleagues and behaving in a way that "reflected positively on your husband and your community," helping to make the couple "a package which is admired and respected." What were the rewards of corporate-wifing? Says Peg, "A nice lifestyle, a certain stature—if those things are important to you." But after her divorce, it was advocacy, not lifestyle, that became most important to her. As executive director of the shelter, Peg put the program together, developing policy, procuring grants, recruiting staff, etc. A key concern of Peg's was overcoming existing prejudices about battered women, educating the community about how to help them. The goal was to counteract a widespread tendency, on the part of both individuals and institutions like churches, to look away from domestic violence, to regard it as a personal problem or family business, to assume that abused women had brought the trouble upon themselves and that the solution was to love their abusers more and work harder on their marriages.

In 1985, Peg, who for some time had "longed to be back out West," moved to Ashland, OR. Peg "loves new experiences" and found Ashland "a beautiful place to live" where the culture encouraged a focus on "the individual person." She pursued her interest in advocacy by taking a state job as a social worker. Given large caseloads, Peg worked to carry out the state's mission of keeping families together. She also dealt with sexual, drug, child, and spousal abuse. The work was challenging. Peg discovered that there was a cyclical nature to many dysfunctional families, with dependent children sometimes

becoming dependent adults. And it pained her to find that the state's emphasis on moving children out of foster care and reuniting them with their families sometimes meant that the children would be abused again.

Seeking an opportunity to use her skills in a different, more impactful way—and to be better compensated for them—Peg left social work in 1989. She moved to southern California and reconnected with the corporate world. She worked on management teams in human resource departments, helping to "change the culture." "I went from family dysfunction to corporate dysfunction," she says. Over the next 22 years, first in California and then in the Seattle area, to which she returned in 1994, Peg worked for numerous start-ups and corporations, including Microsoft, McCann Erickson, and Eddie Bauer Corporate, and did independent contracting as well. She was active in recruiting personnel and also in identifying individual employees who had the potential to become leaders. Her corporate employers valued her analytical skills. "I have an ability to read people well," she says. "I make things happen." For example, while managing the HR department in the Seattle office of a nationally recognized company headquartered in New York City, Peg was instrumental in creating and supporting a culture "built on trust, respect, recognition, creativity, honesty and transparency." She was "a resource to head off potential conflicts and to advise staff. Validating reality, providing perspective, and coaching staff helped us adhere to our values and to try to maintain as functional a culture as possible." During recessions, when there was little need for recruiters in the HR industry, she worked in outplacement, helping companies lay off staff, conduct resume and job-search workshops, etc.

Over the years, as technology advanced and corporations placed an increasing emphasis on technical networking, Peg's role in the corporate world changed also. She began to phase herself out of that world, then retired completely in 2011. She continues, however, to facilitate and nudge. She has a daughter and a son and five grandsons. "My daughter's family is local and I am very involved in their lives. I also help my daughter with her business, a busy psychotherapy practice." Her son's family lives in Virginia where he is an executive director in a cyber security company, and she stays in touch with them "via Skype and Dropbox photo share." She volunteers five hours a week at the Northshore Senior Center, the second largest senior center in the U.S. Following the lead of her uncle, who traced the history of the Buckmaster family back to 1503 in England, she is doing genealogical research on her mother's Irish family. Sensing her energy and interest, the Class of '57's organizational committee has invited her to join them. "It will be fun to see how I can contribute," says Peg, advocating, as always, for the virtues of staying active, involved, and helpful.

