1997

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Recommended Citation
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We became neighbors with Peter Popovich in the summer of 1965, and at that time his children were not living near him. We kind of took Peter into our family. I do not know if we adopted him or he adopted us. We got to know Peter very, very well. Peter was very important to Karen and to me and to our children. He helped us raise our children in many ways.

I can remember the time one of our little girls, at the age of four, decided she would run away. Karen stationed Peter by the gate and then packed a suitcase for our daughter. As she walked down the driveway and got to the gate, she was met by Peter Popovich, who said, “Where are you going, Ginny?” She said she was running away. Peter told her it was time to go home now, and she said, “All right,” and turned around and went back.

I remember when our little Julie was two years old, and Karen and I were on a business trip in Arizona. We got a call in the night telling us that Julie had caught her finger in the flywheel of an exercycle, and Peter had taken her to a plastic surgeon and had her fixed up.

I recall the time when Peter suffered an accident with a lawn mower and our daughter Ginny, age fourteen, found a plastic surgeon for him. She saw to it that Peter was well taken care of.

Our children loved Peter Popovich, and they never ever called him just Mr. Popovich. They always called him Mr. Peter Popovich. “Mom, Mr. Peter Popovich is on the beach. Can we go down there?”

The relationship that I was fortunate enough to develop with Peter was probably one of the rare relationships that few of us ever have the privilege to have. What you saw in public was what you
I could lay my most personal thoughts on Peter and bounce my thoughts off of him. Peter was always there. He was always understanding and gave me great advice.

For example, I learned things from Peter. I learned you could be named Popovich, be from the Iron Range, be a DFLer, and still be a great human being. Peter taught me a great deal. Peter taught me that it is possible to disagree agreeably. I would like to think that I maybe taught him a little bit, too.

Peter was a man of great integrity. His morals were unquestionable. He took great care of his father. Mr. Popovich, Sr., never went to a nursing home. He stayed with Peter until the very end. We took his dad on a couple of trips. I can remember so well when Peter’s dad was dying, and Karen and I were talking to Peter. Peter knew only a few phrases in Croatian. He said his father said in Croatian, “I am tired.” Peter was able to answer in Croatian, “Sleep now,” and he did.

I do not know why this happened, but I can remember when Governor Perpich gave me the privilege of informing Peter that he was to become the chief justice of the supreme court. I went next door, and Gail was there with Peter. What a happy time that was when his family moved near him and when he married Gail. Gail has become a dear friend, just as Peter was. Gail has meant so much to Peter and brought so much joy to his life, that as a friend of Peter’s, I cannot be grateful enough to her. I went next door to tell Peter that he was to become chief justice. An example of the kind of person he was was exemplified that morning. He was upset because he figured he was not the one most deserving of the title chief justice, and he contacted the Governor and told him this; but the Governor, being the Governor, got his way. I think we will all agree that Peter was a wonderful chief justice.

Peter was a great human being and friend. The thought comes to me, “Sleep now, Peter.”