

## Jerry Hruby-Holy

Jerry J. Holy remains one of the most respected and admired professionals in the lighting industry even after his passing on December 5, 2008, in Prague at the age of 84.

Known as “a man of his word”, he believed and lived his favorite quote daily. “Don’t wait for your ship to come in, swim out to it”.

Born in Prague, he was the youngest of three sons of a well known Prague lawyer. At the end of the Second World War, Jerry enrolled in the Law Faculty of Prague’s Charles University where he met his future wife and business partner Renee. Their studies were abruptly terminated in the spring of 1948, when the Communist Government expelled them from university for their political activism.

As a leader of the political underground, Jerry was captured and sent to prison where he spent months being interrogated and tortured. Through ingenuity and determination, he managed to escape from prison and eventually flee Czechoslovakia on foot by crossing into Austria and eventually across the Alps in the dead of winter into Italy where he was reunited with Renee.

Jerry’s courage and determination throughout this time are reflected in the many army decorations he received for his valor. He risked his personal freedom to help people flee Czechoslovakia and assist in the smuggling of crucial documents to foreign governments.

Toward the end of 1949, Jerry and Renée were both granted immigration visas to Canada and in 1950 they sailed across the Atlantic to begin a new life together.

Arriving in Montreal, Quebec in February 1950, Jerry immediately went to work for Arnold Schonbek, another well-known name in the lighting industry. He continued to work for Schonbek until 1955 when he decided that it was time to start his own chandelier cleaning and repair business. His business started in his apartment kitchen and grew to the point where he had to rent small work shops to accommodate the expansion into manufacturing. His first customers were churches in rural Québec

His business continued to flourish and his client base steadily expanded to include some of the most respected names in hospitality, gaming and retail. With his wife Renee by his side, Jerry began to work with customers from around the world in a variety of sectors. In a relatively short period of time, Unilight garnered a reputation for innovation, reliability and integrity.

Throughout his life Jerry achieved many career and personal goals. Some of his business highlights included the opening of the new Unilight factories in Montreal and China, along with the celebration of Unilight’s 50th year in business. On a personal note, Jerry was especially proud when he and Renee received their Canadian citizenship in 1950 and eventually their law degrees from Charles University in Prague after the fall of Communism in 1989.

Jerry’s business was his passion, but he was also very passionate about his family: his wife, his two sons, his only grandchild and his extended family at Unilight.

Best known for his generosity, Jerry was an active member in the Order of Malta and supported a variety of local charities and cultural organizations. He also enjoyed sports and was inspired by the natural beauty of his new country, Canada.

Well respected and admired by so many, he remained a constant source of inspiration to his family, his employees and the lighting community well into his 84th year.

