



JOSEPH SPLINGAERD

May 21, 1919 – April 21, 2011

Rest in Peace, Grandpa Joe

My Father, Joseph Splingaerd

By Anne Splingaerd Megowan

Dad was born in North China nearly 92 years ago. His father Remy was the son of “The Belgian Mandarin,” Paul Splingaerd. His mother, Anna Zhang, was from Lanzhou, in China’s far west. Dad used to tell us that he learned to be so diplomatic because he had eight sisters. Two of them survive him: Aunt Lucie of Monaco, and Aunt Susie of Paris.



Only son Joseph at about age 5, in sailor suit, with his parents and sisters in Tientsin

Joseph married one of the prettiest girls in the British Concession in Tianjin, a Scottish Eurasian by the name of Mary Anderson. They had two children, Jean-Pierre (Peter) and Marie Anne (Anne). Our family moved to Hong Kong in 1947 with little more than what we could carry in a suitcase. In Hong Kong Dad got certified in accounting, and even taught a couple of classes in the subject at Wah Yan College.

He became a CPA and worked for Peat Marwick Mitchell in Tokyo. A client liked his work well enough to hire him to become comptroller for their company in Mexico City. This was Encyclopedia Britannica’s Latin America branch. As Vice President and Treasurer of EB, he traveled throughout South America. Mum would sometimes travel with him. They enjoyed a comfortable and gracious life in Mexico, where Dad went fishing almost every weekend, and Mum enjoyed needlework, belonged to various clubs, including bridge groups, the book club, and the flower arranging club. Dad liked bridge, too.



Mum and Dad in Mexico City, November 10, 1972

After Mum and Dad put Peter and me through college (which for me included an unforgettable Junior Year in Switzerland) and got us 'married off,' they retired to Canada, where Peter had a business. In 1982 when our youngest, Christine, was born, Mum and Dad moved to Los Angeles. They helped with the babysitting, and delighted in spoiling their grandchildren.

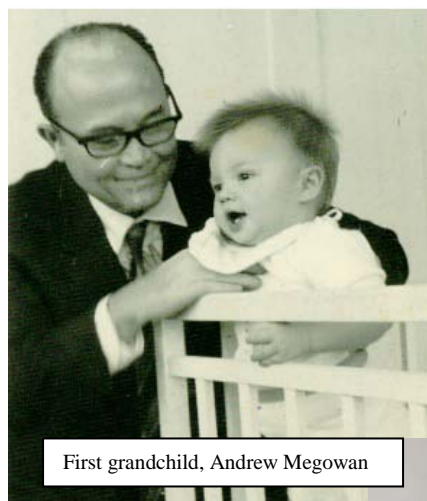
When they moved to Los Angeles, Mum and Dad joined our local parish, St. Timothy's, and Dad sang there every Sunday. A heartwarming memory remains with me of the Sunday I took Dad to St. Timothy a couple of years ago. I was able to arrange for Dad to sing, and he once more filled the church with his booming tenor voice. As they did when he lived in the parish and sang regularly at St. Tim's, there were ladies waiting for him to come down from the choir loft. As we walked slowly back to the car, one lady stopped her car and rolled down her window to tell Dad he had "made her day."

Dad and a deacon at St. Tim's, Ken Potthoff, became good friends after Mum died, and when the mobile home owned by Mike's Uncle Ed in Huntington Beach was for sale, Dad and Deacon Ken bought it. This was in 1996. Not long after moving here, however, Ken had to be placed in a nursing home, and died there.

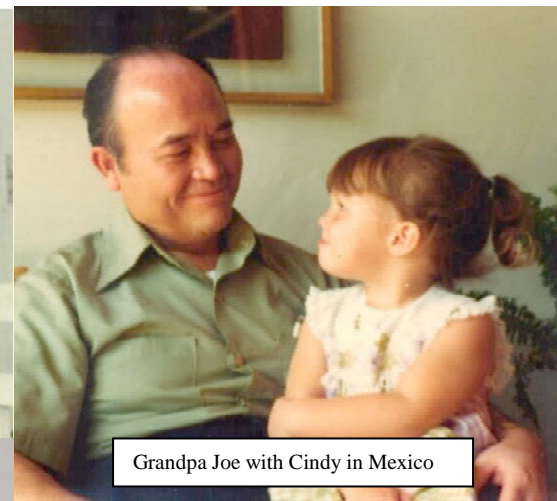
In Huntington Beach, Dad joined the Singing Goodtimers at Rodgers Senior Center, and delighted in singing with them every week, until he could no longer make it to their shows.

Dad had a sense of humor. I remember when we were kids in Japan, Peter was pestering my parents to see a war movie called "To Hell and Back." With his patience worn down, Dad told Peter, "You can go to hell, but don't bother coming back."

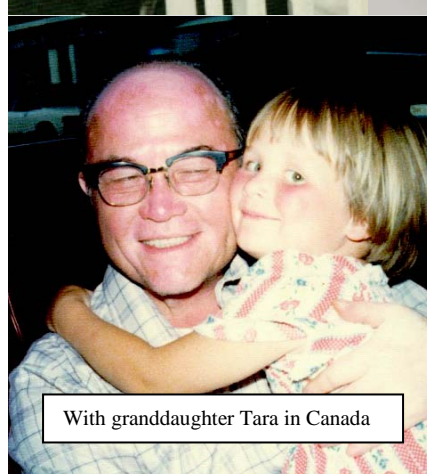
Dad has left us for a better place, but leaves us with fond memories of his sweet and gentle manner and his great voice. Rest in peace, Dad, and thanks for all you've done for us.



First grandchild, Andrew Megowan



Grandpa Joe with Cindy in Mexico



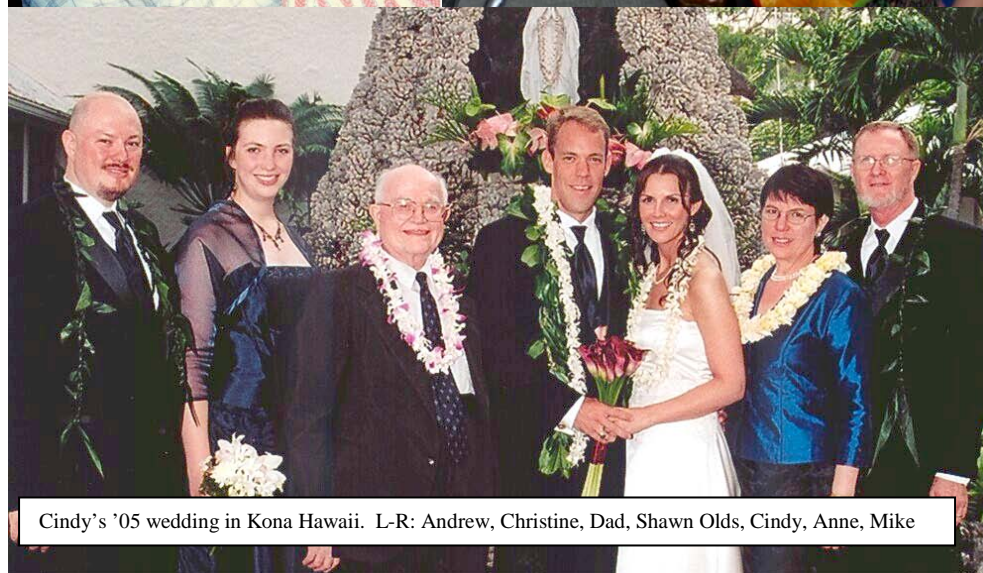
With granddaughter Tara in Canada



With Tara's daughters, Sidney and Katie on 90th



Christmas chez Megowan:
Peter, Alice Wright, Anna, Myra, Anne, Christie and Cindy with Dad.



Cindy's '05 wedding in Kona Hawaii. L-R: Andrew, Christine, Dad, Shawn Olds, Cindy, Anne, Mike