

Pierre Elliott Trudeau

By Lyla Miklos

View Magazine

October 5, 2000

Dear Editor,

I have been crying for days. I am a 25 year old Canadian woman who has been crying over the death of Pierre Elliott Trudeau since I first heard about it on the evening of Thursday September 28. That particular Thursday I was just about to leave work to take part in Toronto's "Take Back The Night" Protest Rally and March when someone came bursting into my office declaring Trudeau had died. Immediately I put it on CBC Television and as a montage of classic Trudeau images flashed across the screen tears were falling from my cheeks. Two weeks earlier police had raided a women's bath house event I had attended. I was furious and felt a compelling need to add my voice to the protest. Trudeau had once said that the state "did not belong in the bedrooms of the nation". I wholeheartedly agreed and my voice along with the voices of several of my feminists and queer sisters were a fitting tribute to the ideals Trudeau had believed and pioneered his entire life.

For the past several days I would open the newspaper and read the tributes to Trudeau and again and again my eyes would swell with tears. I only met the man once. I wasn't even ten years old and my grandparents and father had taken me to see a musical that took place in and was about Hamilton in the Great Hall of Hamilton Place. Prior to the show there was a reception in honour of the Prime Minister. Trudeau was putting some hors d'oeuvres on a plate as my Grandfather kept trying to strongly encourage me to go up to the man and introduce myself. I was far too shy at the time to talk to strangers so I ended up clinging to my Grandfather as he talked Northern Politics to the then Prime Minister.

Both my grandfather and my father were huge fans of Trudeau and the Liberal Party. I remember seeing my Father going out door to door with his red "Liberal" jacket campaigning for the party on more than one occasion. My Grandfather, Grandmother, Great Uncle, and Father escaped from a Communist Hungary during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution with only the clothes on their backs. My Father's family refused to live under a regime where freedom of thought and ideas were not permitted. They wanted to come to Canada and they did.

In the early 1970's they eventually found a home in Frobisher Bay, Baffin Island, NWT. Frobisher Bay, now called Iqaluit and the capital of the Territory of Nunavut, was where I was born in 1974 and it was also where the Frobisher Inn, Frobisher Bay's first hotel and my family's business was born too. For years The Frobisher Inn was the place to stay for many a dignitary. Everyone from the British Royalty, to Mr. Dress Up, to yes Mr. Pierre Elliott Trudeau had at one time slept in it's rooms. Although The Frobisher Inn still exists, sadly it is no longer owned by the Miklos Family.

My Grandfather and Trudeau were roughly the same age. Unfortunately, my Grandfather passed away a little over a decade ago due to the ravages of cancer. Trudeau and my Grandfather Dezso Miklos Sr. were noble, classy, charismatic, and passionate men. Their passion is something that I don't see in our Canadian leaders today. Without the passion and the vision that pioneers such as my grandfather and Trudeau had I wouldn't be here today. As a woman, a feminist, a queer activist, and a media professional I can see so many of the rights and freedoms I enjoy today are thanks to the tireless efforts of Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

It is frightening to see so much of what Trudeau fought for slowly eroding away. Disappointingly many of these things are disappearing because far too many of us are becoming complacent and lazy. Freedom is something you have to fight for every day. Under

Trudeau we as Canadians were carving out a very unique identity for ourselves. Stubbornly independent of our American neighbours. Our current political leaders have become uninspiring and timid. I doubt any of them would inspire the emotional outpouring from Canadians we have all witnessed over the past few days.

Justin Trudeau said in his eulogy on Tuesday that Trudeau had left politics in 1984 "but he came back for Meech. He came back for Charlottetown. He came back to remind us of who we are and what we're all capable of." Maybe what Justin was trying to tell us is akin to what JFK, the former American President that Trudeau has been compared to much of lately, had once said "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." We have the power to change things and make things better for us and for our children and their children's children. We all have a Trudeau living inside of us that is waiting to come out and give them all hell and pirouette in the face of those who would tell us freedom is not something worth fighting for every day.

Sincerely,
Lyla Miklos