

# REMARKS OF WILLIAM J. BOWE ON THE OCCASION OF THE 70<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY OF PETER B. NORTON

CARLTON CLUB  
RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL  
MAY 4, 1999

IT IS AN HONOR FOR CATHY AND ME TO BE INVITED BY PETER AND  
HEATHER TO JOIN YOU IN THE CELEBRATION OF PETER'S 70<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY.

QUITE FRANKLY, I WAS A LITTLE SURPRISED TO BE ASKED. PETER HIRED  
ME AS ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA'S GENERAL COUNSEL IN 1986. WHEN HE  
RETIRED IN 1995, I LOOKED UP THE CONFIDENTIAL JOB EVALUATION REPORTS  
HE GAVE ME. ONE SAID, "BOWE IS AN EMPTY SUIT."

ANOTHER SAID, "BOWE IS ONE BALD TIRE WE CAN DO WITHOUT."

THE ONE THAT REALLY HURT READ, "WHAT BRITANNICA REALLY NEEDS  
ARE TWO BILL BOWES. UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE SIX."

PETER WASN'T SUBTLE IN TRYING TO FORCE A FAST PERSONNEL  
CHANGE AT EB. AT ONE SALES MEETING IN HAWAII, PETER TOLD ME TO GO

HAVE A SWIM AT KAA NAPALI BEACH. THIS WAS AT A TIME WHEN HE KNEW THE RIPTIDE WARNINGS WERE UP.

TO GET ALONG WITH PETER YOU HAD TO GO ALONG. EARLY IN MY EMPLOYMENT, I ARRIVED AT 7:30 A.M. FOR A 7:30 A.M. MEETING. PETER TOLD ME I WAS LATE. HE SAID THE COMPANY RAN ON BRITISH ROYAL NAVY TIME, AND "ON TIME" ALWAYS MEANT FIVE MINUTES EARLY. AS PUNISHMENT FOR BEING LATE, HE CUT MY RUM RATION.

YOU CAN'T SAY PETER EVER FORGOT HIS BRITISH ROOTS. WHEN HE READ PRINCESS DIANA WAS BULIMIC, HE FEDEXED HER A SILVER TONGUE DEPRESSOR. THIS WAS PACKAGED WITH A FRUIT CAKE HE'D GOTTEN AS A GIFT THE PREVIOUS CHRISTMAS.

HE COULD BE CHEAP THOUGH. WHEN SHE STARTED DATING DODI FAYED, THE HARROD'S HEIR, HE BEGAN SENDING HER HARROD'S GIFT CERTIFICATES. HE FIGURED HE'D SAVE MONEY SINCE SHE PROBABLY WOULDN'T CASH THEM.

WHEN IT CAME TO BUSINESS, PETER WASN'T EXACTLY A VISIONARY. HE CONCLUDED A LONG-TERM LEASE FOR BRITANNICA AT 310 SOUTH MICHIGAN AT \$20 PER SQUARE FOOT. THIS WAS RIGHT BEFORE THE MARKET WENT TO \$9 A SQUARE FOOT.



PETER ALSO HAD A HARD TIME DIGESTING THE IMPACT OF COMPUTERS IN THE INFORMATION AGE. BRITANNICA'S NORTH AMERICAN CHIEF, PATRICIA WIER, TOLD HIM COMPUTERS COULD HAVE A REVOLUTIONARY EFFECT ON THE ENCYCLOPEDIA BUSINESS. PETER TOLD HER TO BUY MORE HANDHELD CALCULATORS WITH THE EB THISTLE ON THEM IF SHE THOUGHT GIVING THEM AWAY AS SALES PROMOTION GIFTS WOULD HELP SELL MORE BOOKS.

WHEN SHE ASKED HIM TO LET HER PUT THE COMPANY ONLINE, HE SAID NO. HE SAID IT MADE NO SENSE TO MAKE THE EMPLOYEES LINE UP FOR NO GOOD REASON.

PETER DIDN'T ALWAYS KNOW HIS PRODUCT EITHER. BOB BASEMAN, THE SALES MANAGER, ONCE ASKED PETER WHAT HE THOUGHT ABOUT THE PROPAEDIA. PETER SAID IF BOB NEEDED A NEW FOOT DOCTOR, HE SHOULD GET THE BEST.

PETER STILL TRIES TO THROW HIS WEIGHT AROUND AT BRITANNICA. HE RECENTLY ASKED ME TO USE MY INFLUENCE TO PUT THIS BIOGRAPHY IN THE SET:

NORTON, PETER BOWES (b. 1929, LONDON, ENGLAND) NORTON  
TRAINED AT DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, THE PRESTIGIOUS IVY  
LEAGUE SCHOOL.

A WAR HERO AT THE 1956 BATTLE OF SUEZ, HIS STEELY GLARE  
CAUSED GAMEL ABDEL NASSAR TO FIRST BLINK, THEN SHIT.

NORTON LEFT THE ROYAL NAVY SHORTLY THEREAFTER WITH A  
CUSHY PENSION.

NEVER ONE TO SIT IDLE, THE BURNING AMBITION OF THIS HUMBLY  
BORN, BUT BRILLIANT LAD, LED NORTON NEXT TO AN EXCITING  
PUBLISHING CAREER WITH ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA IN  
LONDON, TORONTO AND CHICAGO.

SEEING THE COMPUTER AGE COMING AT AN EARLY POINT,  
NORTON AUTHORIZED A CALCULATOR GIVEAWAY PROGRAM TO  
BOOST BOOK SALES. HE LATER CO-INVENTED THE INTERNET  
WITH AL GORE.

ENAMORED OF THE WORLD OF HIGH FINANCE AND PURSUING HIS  
LIFELONG LOVE OF LEARNING, NORTON INCREASINGLY SPENT HIS  
TIME WITH BANKERS AND UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO TRUSTEES.

NOW IN RETIREMENT, THE BLACK-HAIRED, 6 FOOT 8 INCH,  
NORTON CAN BE FOUND HITTING HOLES-IN-ONE, ANSWERING FAN  
MAIL AND WRITING COMPUTER SOFTWARE UTILITIES HE NAMES  
AFTER HIMSELF.

I COULD GO ON, BUT QUITE FRANKLY, IT'S A LITTLE DEPRESSING.  
PETER IS HEALTHIER AND MORE PHYSICALLY FIT AT 70 THAN I AM AT  
56.

BUT I SHOULDN'T LET THESE DIFFERENCES GET ME DOWN. AFTER  
ALL, IT'S BEEN MY PLEASURE TO SERVE IN THE COMPANY OF A MAN SO  
DEVOTED TO BRITANNICA THAT HE REPEATLY CUT MY PAY AND  
BENEFITS FOR NO GOOD REASON. THIS IS ALSO THE MAN WHO  
REGULARLY CALLED ME FROM HIS HOME WEEKDAY AFTERNOONS TO  
SLURRINGLY URGE ME TO WORK HARDER.

HEATHER, YOU ARE A SAINT FOR BEING PETER'S MOTHER  
THERESA OVER THE YEARS. YOU STAYED BY HIM AND CARED FOR HIM,  
WHILE EVERYONE ELSE TURNED THEIR BACKS.

AND PETER, YOUR DROOL CUP IS FULL AGAIN.