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In Memoriam: John Bilyk, 70 (1951 - 2022)

Robe Lighting, Inc. is deeply saddened to announce that John Bilyk, a well-known and colorful figure in the Canadian and American stage lighting communities, died on the evening of December 11, 2022. He was 70 years old. John passed away at home peacefully, after a nearly year-long battle with brain cancer, and he is survived by his wife, Tracey.

John had a storied career in stage lighting that spanned 40 plus years. However, one of John's early formative work experiences was with a men's clothing store in Winnipeg owned by Marc Raymond. Raymond later co-founded Westsun, which grew to be a major Canadian production and installation company. Soon after, John started his stage lighting career at Westsun in Winnipeg. John then relocated to Toronto, partnering with Brock McGinnis to establish the Canadian lighting distribution firm Novatec. Novatec represented notable lighting manufacturers including High End Systems and Celco in the Canadian marketplace. He then joined Fourth Phase (later to become PRG) who had purchased Westsun, to establish one of the first used stage lighting sales outlets, 2nd Stage. John then joined Vari*Lite as the Canadian Sales Manager for several years, reconnecting with Bob Schacherl, whom John previously knew from High End Systems. Shortly after Schacherl joined Czech lighting manufacturer Robe lighting s.r.o., John rejoined his former colleague as Robe Canadian Sales Manager in 2016, where he worked until his passing.

Robert Mokry of LightParts Inc. said, "I met John when I was a sales rep at High End in the 90's. I was assigned to manage Canada, and our distributor was Novatec. I was fortunate that John and I soon became close friends, in addition to our business relationship. I had never met anyone quite like John, and still haven't."

Mokry continued, "First off, John was always a very snappy dresser. I don't ever recall seeing him in a t-shirt in the 30+ years I knew him, even when we shared hotel rooms while on the road together. He was just such a smooth character, but also very down to earth. We could dine on fancy French food and fine wines one night, and greasy Tex Mex and Corona beer the next night, and he was equally happy."

"John was also quite a good golfer, and we enjoyed many rounds together. However, John would 'waggle' quite a bit at the tee. I would of course hassle him about that, which only encouraged him to do it more. John really knew his business on the lighting side and could speak to designers and

technicians very competently. He was a fun guy to talk to and hang out with. Customers loved him. I also loved him and miss him dearly. Fly on my brother.”

Bruce Jordahl, High End Systems / ETC, added, “John was instrumental in the global success of our products early on, and he continued to be a valued member of the automated lighting industry across multiple decades and manufacturers. We truly appreciated his industry wisdom and insight, but moreso his quirkiness and incredibly loveable nature. We will miss him and send our condolences to his loved ones during this difficult time.”

Craig Burross, Chief Sales Officer, Robe Lighting, Inc. concluded, “We all fortunately lived many wonderful memories together with John that will never be forgotten. Rest in Peace J.B.!”

