

**Rinaldo Canonico** (1935-2017) died Wednesday after undergoing heart surgery at an Ottawa hospital.



He was so gregarious and charismatic that he was known in political circles simply by his first name, Rinaldo. He was 82, although he often tried to keep his true age as secret as he did the stories that were shared by his famous clients.

"Anybody who'd ever met him wouldn't forget him," said Peter Clark, an international trade expert and close friend of Mr. Canonico and his wife, **Pat**. "He didn't operate in half measures."

For more than four decades, he tended the hair of MPs, senators, judges and celebrities in downtown Ottawa. Prime ministers including Stephen Harper, Brian Mulroney and **Pierre Trudeau** all reportedly sat in his chair, as did many of their wives. But it was his friendship with Mila Mulroney that brought him the most fame.

In 1993, he described how he kept her trademark brunette bob looking good, telling the Ottawa Citizen, "I add special-effects highlights with cellophane so her hair always looks shiny."

The Mulroney government appointed him to the board of the Federal Business Development Bank of Canada, sparking charges that the prime minister was so enamoured of patronage that he extended it as far as his wife's hairstylist. But the appointment was well deserved, Mr. Clark said: "He understood business."

Mr. Canonico, who had a history of heart trouble and had been in hospital for some time, appeared to be doing better during a recent visit, Mr. Clark said.

Another friend said he sounded upbeat, but died suddenly Wednesday afternoon.

"He'd actually been fairly bubbly in the morning," Mr. Clark said. "He went very quickly in the end."

Mr. Canonico's salon was once voted the best in Canada and his work was known around the world. His famous clients included Sophia Loren; Sarah, the Duchess of York; Queen Noor of Jordan; and even former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, whose signature bouffant was softened by his touch.

Mr. Clark said Mr. Canonico's fame was no accident.

"He felt if you weren't going to be the best at something, what was the point in doing it," he said. "He set out to prove himself and he did it."

Mr. Canonico arrived in Canada from **Lago** (Cosenza) Italy in 1956 at only 21, having already apprenticed in one of Italy's best salons. He spent more than a decade cutting hair at the Ritz Hotel in **Montreal** before returning to **Ottawa** and setting up a salon at Place de Ville in 1968.

In 1993, he moved to the World Exchange Plaza and, in 2008, to a shop in the Byward Market that still bears his name.

His shops were franchised and there are now four locations in the city. Mr. Canonico himself stopped cutting hair more than five years ago, leasing out his **Byward Market salon** in 2012.

Beyond hair salons, he also owned several restaurants in Ottawa and was a community leader and frequent generous donor to local causes.

His wife, Pat, was by his side always, as his business partner. He also loved to cook and to golf and was determined to be great at both.

"He was a great man," Mr. Clark said. "We miss him."

**Rinaldo Canonico** left us on May 24, 2017 after a lengthy struggle with heart disease. His beloved wife, soul mate and his business partner Pat was by his side to the very end. To suggest that Rinaldo, who was generally known only by his first name, was a legend is an understatement. He was a larger than life, excelling at everything he set his mind to. Rinaldo arrived in Ottawa from Lago, Italy as a young man. He thought big – there were no half measures for him. Rinaldo was driven by a determination to succeed and to be the best at whatever he did. He felt if you weren't going to be the best at doing something, what was the point in doing it. Rinaldo honed his artistic and entrepreneurial skills working around the world. He returned to Ottawa, opening his first salon on O'Connor Street in the 1960s. Other salons followed – each one bigger and better. Building a successful business in the hair industry was no easy task. He was instrumental in revolutionizing the hair and beauty care industry, while building an empire. Four franchises carry on his name. Rinaldo was a stylist – he did not simply cut hair. Woe betide anyone who called him a barber. He was a true artist who brought out the best in his clients. He injected his heart and soul into his work. He was a stylist to royalty, politicians, diplomats and celebrities. Prime Ministers Brian Mulroney and Pierre Trudeau, Queen Noor of Jordan, Sophia Loren, Sarah, Duchess of York, and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher were only a few of his better known clients. Never faddy, Rinaldo was always impeccably groomed and dressed in classic Italian fashion. Respect was very important to Rinaldo – respect for his art and most important, respect for his clients and his friends. Rinaldo was kind, generous, gregarious, charismatic and always charming. He would talk to anyone and everyone. He had a gift for making anyone he was with feel like they were a star. He touched the lives of thousands around the world. His friends and clients have many stories about Rinaldo – they would fill volumes. However, Rinaldo, always the true and discrete gentleman, declined offers to tell his clients' secrets to the world. Rinaldo was an animal lover, a patron and sponsor of fundraisers for Ottawa Humane Society. He was devoted to his Maltese terriers. He has joined Coco and Chanel – while Lola remains behind with Pat. An evening with Pat and Rinaldo was always memorable. Great wine, Rinaldo's osso buco and scampi were world class – as are Pat's crab cakes. Rinaldo discovered

golf in 1986 with his shadow and best buddy Mounir (Moe) Boushey. Rinaldo's life changed forever. Stories of his prowess on the golf course abound. Rare for someone who took up the game in his 50s, Rinaldo could and frequently did, until recently, "shoot his age". Rinaldo's salon was voted best in Canada at the 1999 Contessa Awards. His business acumen was recognized by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney who appointed Rinaldo to the Board of the Federal Business Development Bank of Canada. Rinaldo lived his life giving and teaching. He mentored many young hairstylists. He had little patience for those who complained about their lot in life – his view was that life did not owe us anything, and success was due to hard work, not to luck. Rinaldo Canonico, dearly loved husband of Patricia; dear brother of Maria Giordano (Fernando), Gabriel (Franca) and Frank (Maria). Dear uncle to his nieces and nephews. A special thank you is extended to Chris Hawley and Tony Canonico for taking care of Rinaldo during his four-year journey.