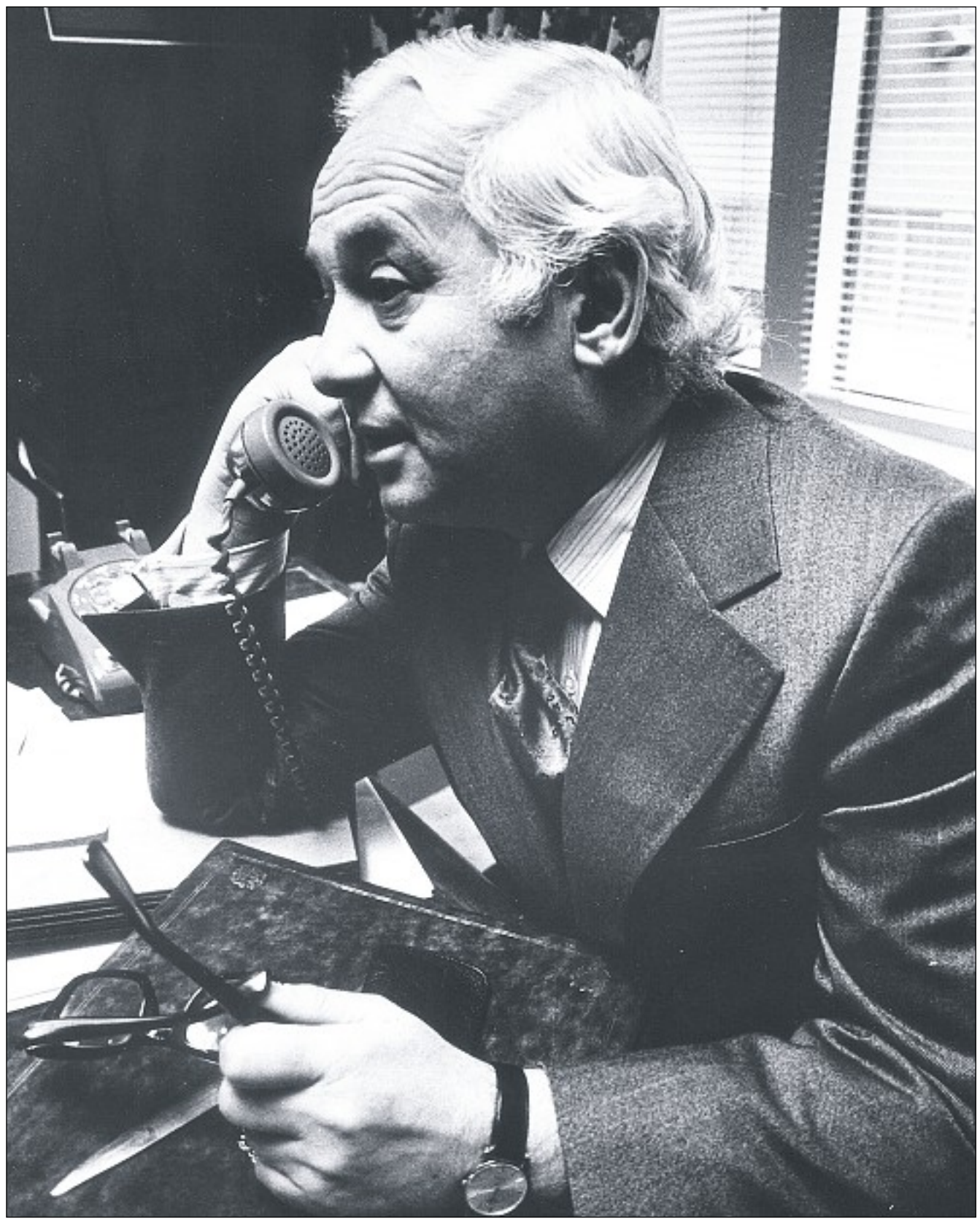
AVENUE

Edwin Goodman, 1924-2006

'Call me Eddie'

A personal remembrance of a man who shaped modern Canada



By James Charles

Edwin A. Goodman, P.C., O.C., Q.C., died over the weekend. He was 88.

If Eddie had lived in the United States, he might have been a household name. But America probably could not have created him, nor would it have known what to do with Goodman if it had. Only contemporary Canada could have produced an Eddie Goodman, and it is a richer place for having done so.

Eddie may be one of the least known yet most influential Canadians of the second half of the 20th century. His glorious, amazingly diverse and productive life mirrors much of what is good today about the country.

Eddie was short and round and had white hair for decades. One of his closest friends and colleagues once affectionately described Goodman as "a little Jewish leprechaun." His bright blue eyes twinkled when he told a story but turned flinty when angry. Nearly everyone who worked at the law firm he founded with his father in 1949 — from senior partners to student lawyers to fax operators — called him by his first name. If someone meeting him for the first time addressed him as Mr. Goodman, he shot back "Call me Eddie" in a warm, gravelly voice tinged with a slight lisp.

Laced throughout his career of more than 60 years as a lawyer, deal maker and political insider was Eddie's involvement in the building of nearly every aspect of post-war Canada. His impact is widespread yet almost unknown outside of a handful of fairly narrow circles.

National and local organizations as diverse as the Royal Ontario Museum, The Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art, the National Ballet, small arts councils, the Boy Scouts and Princess Margaret Hospital, all owe much of their present shape and prominence — some, their very existence — to Eddie's direct help. He raised countless millions of dollars for every one of them. In the 1970s, he chaired the board of the floundering ROM and put it on a solid financial footing. His law partners have joked that Goodman put the bite on so many of Toronto's rich and powerful for one cause or another over the years that they will be repaying his charitable "chits" for years after his death.

If numerous cultural organisations are beholden to Goodman, the list of major businesses owing much to Eddie might be even longer.

Toronto's feisty tabloid newspaper, *The Toronto Sun*, never would have printed a single Sunshine Girl without him. *The Sun* spawned *The Financial Post* and led to this newspaper. Eddie was the first outside investor to ante up when *The Sun* was being raised from the ashes of the defunct *Telegram*, and then rounded up the rest of the money needed. He continued to play a major role in the paper's success over the years.

Four Seasons Hotels, the world's premier chain of luxury hotels, owes a huge debt to him. When Isadore Sharp wanted to buy some downtown land on Toronto's Dundas Street to build his first small hotel in the early 1950s, Eddie made the deal happen. Over the years, Goodman and other lawyers in his firm helped Sharp propel the company into global prominence; two lawyers from the firm are now senior executives. When Eddie married Joan Spadina in the mid-1990s, Sharp's wedding gift to the newlyweds was the free use of the largest suite at the Four Seasons in New York during their honeymoon. Returning from the trip, Eddie —who had been almost everywhere in the world — joked that he had visited countries smaller than their suite.

Without the significant efforts of Eddie and Herb Solway, a partner in his law firm, the Toronto Blue Jays would not have existed. Even before the Jays were a glint in anyone's eye, Goodman was doing legal work for Sam Bronfman's Montreal Expos and Major League Baseball itself. It was contacts made during those years that helped Goodman and Solway deliver on Labatt's desire to own a baseball franchise in Toronto. In fact, when the franchise was granted, the Blue Jays' first office was at Goodman & Goodman.

Eddie served on the board of John Labatt Ltd. for many years, and the law firm did nearly all of the firm's corporate legal work from right after the war until the company was sold to Interbrew in 1995. The relationship was an accident of war: Goodman and a Labatt lawyer served together in France and the relationship blossomed when they returned to post-war civilian life.

When Eddie first became involved with the company, he wanted to learn about the beer business. So, besides touring breweries and talking with brew masters, he spent a few days riding around Toronto on Labatt delivery trucks.Partly in recognition of Goodman's contribution to the company, every month for five decades a case of Labatt's various labels was delivered to Eddie's home.

Eddie didn't just shape Toronto's drinking habits; He was also instrumental in creating Toronto's skyline. Landmarks such as Eaton Centre, SkyDome, the CN Tower and the Toronto-Dominion Centre all were built in part by his legal expertise. Cadillac-Fairview, for many years one of Canada's largest developers of commercial real estate, did not make a move without help from Eddie or one of his law partners.

A master politician, he lost the only election he ever ran in. Shortly after returning from the war, the Tories asked him to run against a Communist in a Toronto working class riding. It was a hopeless task and he lost badly, but he liked the game and moved inside. Besides raising bags of money for scores of politicians, he served as president of the national Progressive Conservative party for many years. During all of the 14 years that Bill Davis was premier of Ontario, the two met for breakfast every Tuesday morning at the Park Plaza Hotel to decide what the government would do that week. Yet while highly partisan, he was also highly pragmatic. He brought in as partners at his firm Kathy Robinson, a former president of the Ontario Liberal Party; Bob Rae, the former NDP premier; and Mike Harris, the two-term PC premier. Eddie, a breeder of thoroughbred horses and long-time racing fan, knew the value of hedging a bet.

He was much more fascinated with politics as an art form than with public policy. When Brian Mulroney was stepping down as Prime Minister, Hugh Segal was considering making a run for the Conservative Party leadership. On a conference call one afternoon, Goodman listened impatiently as the would-be candidate and several of his supporters discussed issues and ideas. Finally, Eddie could not stand it any more. He interrupted and cut to the crux of politics as he knew it: "Fuck the issues! Can we raise the money?"

During Joe Clark's short stint as Prime Minister, Goodman was nearly named Canada's ambassador to Washington until Clark was booted out of office, scuttling the offer. After that, Goodman turned down all suggested political appointments until, many years later, Brian Mulroney asked him to keep an eye on the spies. He named Eddie to the shadowy Canadian Intelligence Review Committee, the Privy Council committee overseeing the RCMP and Canadian Security Intelligence Service. When the appointment was announced, his longtime secretary, Shirley Hodgins, and a small group of people at the firm presented Eddie with a deerstalker cap and an enormous magnifying glass. He relished the job, and delighted in showing off the huge, high- security safe that a couple of burly Mounties wrestled into his office one morning and bolted into the concrete under his parquet floor.

Other than some Hebrew, Goodman spoke only English. Canada became officially bilingual during his stint as national PC president, which is also when he happened to chair the party's first nationally televised leadership convention. He decided to learn enough French to greet delegates and the country in both languages when he gavelled the convention to order. Standing in the spotlight on the podium of Maple Leaf Gardens, Goodman struggled through two or three sentences of badly mangled French and waited for the applause. Instead, from the back of the dark, silent and confused convention floor, a lone voice cried out, "Parlez en français, si'l vous plait!" — please speak French! Eddie collapsed in laughter in full view of the TV cameras.

If scores of the nation's politicians were helped by Eddie, as many artists were given a boost by him, as well. Early in his career, he combined a love of art with his belief that business should actively encourage the country's fledgling creative community. The firm began acquiring and commissioning paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Canadian artists. As the collection grew, pieces came to fill every office and boardroom, and line the hallways of the many floors the firm now occupies in an Eaton Centre tower. By the 1980s, so much art had been acquired that a curator was needed to keep track of what is arguably the best privately owned collection of contemporary Canadian art in the country.

Occasionally, he quietly helped shape Canada's foreign economic policy.

A voracious reader, in 1992 he was studying the black revolution fermenting in white-controlled South Africa. Concluding that it was imperative for Canada to rebuild economic ties with the country it helped isolate during apartheid, he wanted to help ensure that the coming change was peaceful. So, he looked for a way to open business doors to the African National Congress. Prior to the election that did away with Apartheid and propelled Nelson Mandella to South Africa's presidency, Eddie staged a meeting in Toronto, hosting the ANC's chief economic policy maker and introducing him to Canadian executives. Within a year of "The Goodman Forum," Canada led the Commonwealth in lifting its boycott of South Africa. A deputy minister in Ottawa later confided that without Goodman, the boycott may well have remained in place considerably longer.

In early 1993, he decided that Canada should take a more active role in the economic revolution that was changing the face of China. But Ottawa's policy towards Beijing at the time was still mired in a cold, post-Tiananmen Square formality, and was moving towards a more realistic policy far too slowly for Eddie's liking. So he called Prime Minister Mulroney and Michael Wilson, then Minister of International Affairs and Foreign Trade. He told them that he was inviting Zhu Rongji, later China's premier but then the vice premier responsible for designing and shepherding economic reforms, to Toronto to be keynote speaker at a business conference he planned to hold. He said he'd like the government's help, but would go ahead in any event.

Next, the tireless 72-year-old Goodman and a colleague hopped a plane for the 20-hour flight to Beijing to meet Zhu at the Great Hall Of the People. He needed to convince the most powerful man in China to fly to Toronto to speak at his event. During the meeting, a nasty bit of business flared between Goodman and Zhu over the timing and specifics of the trip. Zhu also was concerned about the size of the audience Eddie could produce. Goodman, never known for his patience, became increasingly blunt with Zhu — a hideous cultural faux pas when doing business with anyone in China, let alone the number two man in the country. Everyone in the enormous room — Zhu's aides, Chinese officials, Canadian diplomats, Goodman's colleague who was travelling with him, the hostess serving tea — began squirming in the overstuffed chairs arranged in a neat semi-circle. Trying to lower the temperature, the Canadian ambassador leaned over and said quietly to Eddie, "Let it go. The embassy will work it out with Zhu's people." Goodman swung around shot back at the ambassador in a stage whisper, "Shut up. I'll do it." Zhu, who used an interpreter in the meeting but speaks near-perfect English, looked away and politely covered his mouth as he chuckled at Goodman's salty brashness.

That evening, during a 13-course banquet in Goodman's honour at the Chinese government's posh State Guest Compound in a Beijing suburb, Eddie did what he'd done throughout his career. He made a deal and worked it out.

One month later, Zhu arrived in Toronto and Eddie was at the airport to greet him. As the Chinese leader stood on the tarmac shaking Goodman's hand, he patted Eddie affectionately on his ample stomach and said with a smile, "See, you got me here after all!" The next morning, when Zhu and Eddie walked into a hotel ballroom together, the Vice Premier saw that Goodman was true to his word — something Eddie was known for his entire life. In Beijing, Goodman promised a large turnout and major media coverage. Now, he served up an audience of more than 750 senior executives from around Canada and a few from the United States, all seated behind a phalanx of more than a dozen TV news cameras. Not long after, the Canadian government's policy evolved beyond Tiananmen and a new Prime Minister was leading the first in a series of Team Canada trade missions to China.

Long before any of this, Eddie became a genuine war hero when commanding a tank during the invasion of France. Shortly after D-Day, his tank was blown up by German artillery. Wounded himself, he hauled a severely injured soldier several miles to safety behind the lines while under constant fire. His bravery earned him a mention in dispatches to Allied headquarters in London, a fact of which he was immensely proud for the rest of his life.

Besides being a man of great influence, he was always a man of great humanity. In many ways, Eddie symbolised what much of the world thinks when it thinks of Canada. Part of his humanity no doubt came from his upbringing; but much of it was likely shaped by searing flashes of tragedy that marked his life.

His eldest daughter was killed in a car accident when driving back to university after a weekend visit home. The stone fireplace in Goodman's study just off the living room of his comfy and unprepossessing Forest Hill home still has a chip in it where he hurled a glass in despair and anguish after the Ontario Provincial Police phoned with the tragic news. His first wife, Suzanne, died at a fairly young age following a tortuous, seven-year battle with cancer. He worried constantly about his surviving daughter, Diane, and mother of his only grandchild. She gave up a promising law career in Toronto to do dangerous work around the world for the United Nations. Eddie said that if he opened *The Toronto Sun* at breakfast and read that revolution, famine, genocide or plague had hit some remote corner of the world, he knew where she would be heading.

His empathy towards people was as finely honed as his business and political skills, and it showed in small, quiet ways,

In the 1970s, his law firm employed a hostess who had emigrated from Eastern Europe. A single mother in a foreign country, she had no relatives and few friends in Toronto. Unexpectedly, she passed away. Knowing that her teenage daughter was totally alone, he rounded up the firm's dozen lawyers and insisted that they all attend the funeral. Afterwards, he asked the grieving and frightened daughter what plans she had for the future. She said she would have to quite high school to support herself.

Eddie would hear none of that. He insisted that she stay in school, working part time at the law firm to earn rent and spending money. When she graduated, again he rounded up the lawyers and took them to the ceremony; they were the only "family" she had to share the happy day. He threw a small party, and then encouraged her to continue her schooling. The law firm provided a scholarship so she could learn to be a legal secretary.

When she finished the course, Goodman hired her and she worked at the firm for several years before marrying and having a baby. The infant girl was given the middle name Edwina.

Eddie Goodman was part of a unique generation of Canadians who were born in the early, innocent days of the 20th century, tempered by a brutal depression, winners of a desperate war and beneficiaries of the prosperity that was created through their efforts. Goodman, along with a handful of contemporaries, managed to cajole, muscle, induce and nudge Canada into a small but meaningful player on the world's stage.

He believed that, along with raising a family and building a career, people have a responsibility to help raise and build civil society. It showed in the way the generation of lawyers behind him worked, dealt with people, and helped the community. It shows still in many of the other organizations he helped create and grow.

Eddie's health had been failing for several years, but relatives and people who knew him well said they could still see flashes of the insight, wit and vigour that were his hallmarks for close to a century. He will be mourned by those who knew and loved him, and his memory will remain rich in their mind. And though his was never a household name in Canada, Eddie Goodman's contribution, spirit and energy will be missed not just by Toronto but an entire country.

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▮ James Charles is a Toronto writer who knew Eddie Goodman for the last 15 years.