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Henri Temianka Correspondence; (lte)

Henri Temianka

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Description

This collection contains material pertaining to the life, career, and activities of Henri Temianka, violin virtuoso, conductor, music teacher, and author. Materials include correspondence, concert programs and flyers, music scores, photographs, and books.

Keywords

Henri Temianka, culture, virtuosity in musical performance, violinist, chamber music, camaraderie, press, January 16, 1990, money, funds, death, celebration

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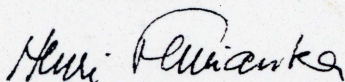
January 16, 1990

Letters to the Editor
New York Times
229 W. 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036

Sir or Madam:

It is an appropriate tribute to the late Laurence Peter, who "theorized on incompetence," that the Los Angeles Times reports that his book The Peter Principle was rejected by 13 publishers, while the New York Times sets the figure at 30. According to the New York Times, the book was finally acquired for \$2,500 and "no one expected the book to be a big hit." According to the Los Angeles Times, publishers were "almost lining up at my door...so I just dusted off the manuscript and handed it to the one I decided was the best." Slight difference! Laurence Peter would have rejoiced to find his theories proved so conclusively.

Yours sincerely,



Henri Temianka
(213) 836-2076

HT/ap

Laurence J. Peter Is Dead at 70; His 'Principle' Satirized Business

By JAMES BARRON

Laurence J. Peter, who climbed the best-seller lists with a book meant to satirize ladder climbers everywhere, died Friday at his home in Palos Verdes Estates, Calif. He was 70 years old.

His widow, Irene Peter, said he died of complications of a stroke he suffered in January 1988.

The Peter Principle, introduced in a 1969 book of the same name that Dr. Peter wrote with Raymond Hull, became as much a part of the language as Murphy's Law and Catch-22. The Peter Principle stated, "In a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence."

Dr. Peter's 179-page explanation of why this was so contained example after example of people whose reward for a job well done was a promotion — and responsibilities they could not handle, meaning no further promotions.

Cream Turns Sour

Dr. Peter found such people in businesses, school systems, government agencies, churches and political parties. "The cream rises until it sours," he wrote, summarizing the result: every bureaucracy was inevitably made up almost entirely of people inadequate to their tasks.

Dr. Peter's principle appealed to middle-management bureaucrats whose shaky pretensions to power the book unmasked. These would-be ladder climbers liked Dr. Peter's description of the boss. "In every thriving organization," he said, "there is a considerable accumulation of dead wood at the executive level."

The book outlined the hazards of ladder climbing, including ulcers, alcoholism, allergies and Tabulatory Gigan-

tism — an obsession with having a bigger desk than one's colleagues.

Dr. Peter maintained that his principle was "the key to an understanding of the whole structure of civilization." He also said he was only kidding. Publisher's Weekly, which was not kidding, said the book was "precisely geared for the Age of Conglomerates." Some conglomerates — who were not kidding either — offered to hire Dr. Peter as their management guru. He turned them down, saying he did not want to rise above his own level of competence.

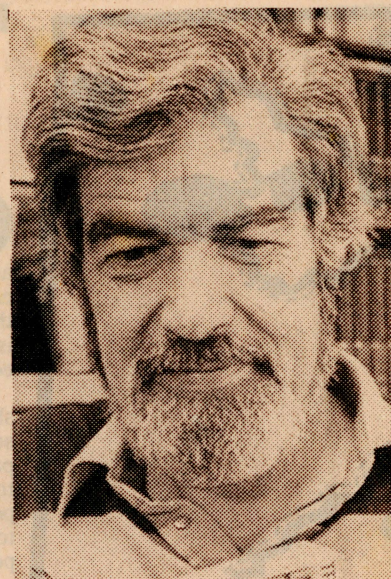
30 Rejection Slips

Dr. Peter's competence as a principle discoverer was not initially recognized. When he first submitted the manuscript in 1964, McGraw-Hill, which had published his education textbook some years earlier, sent back a rejection slip. "I can foresee no commercial possibilities for such a book and consequently can offer no encouragement," the editor wrote.

Thirty publishers and 30 turndowns later, William Morrow & Company paid \$2,500 for the manuscript and ordered a 10,000-copy run of "The Peter Principle: Why Things Always Go Wrong." In the spirit of the principle, Morrow set one letter of the title backwards.

Lawrence Hughes, the chairman and chief executive of the Hearst Trade Books Group, which includes William Morrow, said no one expected the book to be a big hit. But it sold more than 200,000 copies in its first year, was on The New York Times best-seller list through 1970 and was translated into 38 languages.

Dr. Peter was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, on Sept. 16, 1919. He received his bachelor's degree in 1957



Associated Press, 1980

Dr. Laurence Peter

and his master's degree in education in 1958 from Western Washington State College and his doctorate in education from Washington State College in 1963. He taught in Vancouver schools and worked as a psychologist and assistant professor at the University of British Columbia before moving to California in 1966, where he became a professor of education at the University of Southern California.

He retired from academic life in 1970 and lived off the earnings from "The Peter Principle." He wrote eight other books, including "The Peter Prescription" in 1972, "The Peter Quotations" in 1977 and, with the comedian Bill Dana, "The Laughter Prescription" in 1982.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by two sons, John, of Vancouver, and Edward, of Prince George, British Columbia; two daughters, Margaret Denney of Nanose Bay, British Columbia, and Alice Boren, of Falls Church, Va., and three grandchildren.