



Werner L. Polak

May 19, 1936 - February 4, 2026

Born: May 19, 1936

Died: February 4, 2026

Werner Ludwig Polak passed away peacefully on February 4, 2026 with his loved ones by his side. Werner was born in Bremen, Germany in 1936 and came to the United States as a boy during World War II. His family settled in Woodstock, NY, where he grew up and went to school. After graduating from Kingston High School, he enrolled in the U.S. Army. He was both grateful and proud of his service to his country and enjoyed lifelong relationships with his many Army buddies.

Werner took part in the G.I Bill during his service, which gave him the opportunity to earn both his undergraduate and Law Degree at Columbia University.

After graduating law school, he joined Shearman & Sterling law firm where he worked through retirement. The firm was not only his place of work, but also became both family and friends, and he often shared treasured stories of his experiences with his beloved colleagues. He spent 39 years, initially in the corporate department, but for the most part in the litigation department. Early on, he developed an interest in training younger lawyers at the firm and participated in a number of national legal education organizations.

Linde was a client of the firm, and Werner had worked on a number of projects for Linde. Just before his retirement from the firm, he was asked whether he would join Linde as in-house counsel to represent Linde's U.S. subsidiaries, to which he agreed. Werner was able to continue to practice law, which he so enjoyed.

Werner's interest in training continued and he enjoyed mentoring the younger attorneys as well as business managers, not only in legal related matters, but also in the legacy culture, which in his words 'has a tendency to disappear in the background after a corporation undergoes numerous acquisitions and mergers, but which should not be forgotten.'

Later in his career he served on the board and as Chair of the Practicing Law Institute (PLI), where he continued to develop additional friendships. He also served on the Board of Osborn Senior Living in Rye, NY, where he guided strategy.

Werner was passionate about volunteering, the law and his many hobbies. He was deeply principled, striving to make the world a better place through mentoring and volunteering for anyone who asked. Werner generously and humbly shared his guidance and support with many friends, family, colleagues and their children.

Skiing was a top passion of Werner's, and he enjoyed this love over many years with family and friends. While he always appreciated going to many different ski resorts, perhaps his favorite was Steamboat Springs, CO. The mountain there is named Mt. Werner, and no doubt he joked to friends and family there was a close affiliation.

Another top passion was sports, cheering passionately for his Columbia Lions.

He always started college basketball season by assuring his son, a Duke alumni, that this was the year the two schools would make the Final Four. He was an avid Green Bay Packers fan and regularly travelled to Lambeau Field for games. His late brother Gunther lived in Chicago and a favorite family memory was of Opening Day one year at Soldier Field where the two brothers wore their respective colors and cheered on their teams. Green Bay won that contest, but that did not matter to Werner. What mattered most to him was that the family was all together. That was the biggest win of all.

Werner is survived by so many loved ones, family and friends, including his family Deborah, Douglas, Jack Werner, Karen, Evelyn, Michael, Evan, Aileen. Werner's family looks forward to celebrating an incredible life, hearing your stories and sharing ours.

In lieu of flowers, Werner would have appreciated just a simple act of kindness to others. If you have a charity of choice, please consider donating. But if you feel inspired, The Osborn would be appreciated. <https://www.theosborn.org/>. If you are in the Town of Woodstock NY, Werner has a brick with his name at the main entrance of the Woodstock Library. The library is consistent with all the core beliefs Werner held. <https://www.woodstock.org/>

Previous Events

Viewing

FEB 13. 3:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Dwyer & Michael's Funeral Home
90 North Broadway
Tarrytown, NY 10591
(914) 631-0621
info@dwyerichaels.com
<https://www.dwyermichaelsfh.com>

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Mass of Christian Burial

FEB 14. 10:00 AM.

Immaculate Conception R.C.Church
16 N. Broadway
Irvington, NY

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Interment

FEB 14. 11:30 AM (ET)

Gate Of Heaven Cemetery
10 W Stevens Avenue
Hawthorne, NY 10532

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Tribute Wall

CR

“ Dear Karen, Dear Members of the Polak Family,

I had the good fortune of working with Werner Polak between 2007 and 2012 in my capacity as Linde's Chief Legal Officer, based in Munich/Germany.

Werner was an excellent and dedicated lawyer and advisor. The Linde Group, its senior management and its legal department owe him a great debt of gratitude.

What is more, Werner was a very educated and cultivated man with a broad range of interests. Always collegial and kind and with his trademark twinkle in the eyes, his positive presence was felt in every conversation, including those where he remained in the background, sometimes sporting a knowing, and never mischievous, smile.

I will miss him and our wide-ranging exchanges, which continued for quite some time after my departure from Linde, immensely.

The fact that Werner has lead, as far as I can tell, 'a life well-lived' shall provide some consolation.

With all my best wishes to Werner's family and all those whom he held dear,

Christian Rau

Christian Rau - February 20 at 12:11 PM

AJ

“ Anmay & Jeremy purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Werner L. Polak.



Anmay & Jeremy - February 13 at 05:06 PM

RL

“ Some favorite Werner memories.

When I was a junior associate at Sherman & Sterling working Werner's cases, the team would meet early Friday afternoon to catch up and plan upcoming tasks. The meetings were generally short as Werner packed to get out and hit the slopes. But he'd listen closely, assess and clearly convey the next week's goals. I was bowled over – he was a true bon vivant and clear-headed leader.

At a Linde event in Munich, Werner and I were walking down a street as I shared with him the Germany curse words my grandmother taught me. Werner was emphatic: “No, no, no. You must certainly avoid using those words while you're here.”

The melodious and enthusiastic way Werner would respond when picking up the phone. “Hello-oh, Richharrd!”

About ten years ago, I was at meeting in Washington with a bunch of high-priced attorneys and mentioned that Werner was retiring from Linde. Half the room spontaneously inquired after him, recounted past cases and wished him well. I had to ask, “who here does not know Werner Polak?”

The man was a legend. He will be missed.

Richard Lingg - February 12 at 11:50 AM

KM

I am deeply moved and grateful for your kind words. It was often that you were mentioned at home, always with genuine fondness.
Karen

Karen Marzuillo - February 13 at 04:58 AM



“ *Gracious Lavender Basket was purchased for the family of Werner L. Polak.*



February 12 at 10:11 AM

MM

“ *Megan, Joyce, Rose and Mike purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Werner L. Polak.*



Megan, Joyce, Rose and Mike - February 12 at 09:40 AM

TT

“ *The 529 Marketing Team purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Werner L. Polak.*



The 529 Marketing Team - February 11 at 04:16 PM



“ *Basket of Memories was purchased for the family of Werner L. Polak.*



February 11 at 11:59 AM



“ *Rose Remembrance was purchased for the family of Werner L. Polak.*



February 10 at 12:32 PM



“ *The Osborn Staff & Trustees purchased the Serene Reflections Bouquet for the family of Werner L. Polak.*



The Osborn Staff & Trustees - February 10 at 12:06 PM



“ *Written in the Stars was purchased for the family of Werner L. Polak.*



February 10 at 10:27 AM

KI

“*Kate, Don, Mary Kate, Emma and Izzi. purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Werner L. Polak.*



Kate, Don, Mary Kate, Emma and Izzi. - February 10 at 10:15 AM



“*Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Werner L. Polak.*



February 09 at 09:07 PM

JA

“*JJ, Carolan, and I send our deepest condolences.*

James - February 07 at 02:22 PM

AR

“*Dear Werner, goodbye! God bless you and your family! We are happy and proud of your friendship and shall forever cherish fond memories of the times we met or got to share your thoughts. Love, Andreas and Ilona*



Andreas Renner - February 06 at 09:26 AM