

Past President Skeen Dies



D. A. SKEEN, President of Lions International during two of its most eventful years, has died at the age of 84. He passed away in a Salt Lake City, Utah hospital following surgery for a ruptured vein.

As President in 1944-45, he led the Association during the final months of World War II, when many Lions were away in the military service and club projects were directed to aiding the war effort. Yet as a lifelong humanitarian, he worked strenuously for world peace and the United Nations.

Lion Skeen once wrote: "While fully appreciating the value of national traditions . . . still I am fully convinced of the necessity of a new philosophy of education in every country, based upon understanding the peoples of other nations, their relationships to each other, and the yielding of force to reason and right and justice—a willingness to live and let live."

In the final months of his administration, he was appointed consultant to the U.S. delegation to the historic UN charter conference in San Francisco. Joined by associate consultants Past Int. Pres. Fred W. Smith (then an International Vice-President) and founder Melvin Jones, Lion Skeen won recognition for efforts made to keep other consultants informed on charter conference progress. He was a director of the American Association of the UN from 1945 to 1962.

In 1946, he and then Int. Pres. Clifford D. Pierce brought a sorely needed message of support to the 51-nation Paris Peace Conference, which had been stalled by strife and disagreement. When then U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes finally called the conference to order, he did so with a solid copper gavel presented to him by Lions Skeen and Pierce.

After earning a degree at Utah State Agricultural College, he was graduated cum laude in 1910 with a law degree from the University of Chicago. He soon demonstrated his concern for justice by helping to set up legal aid societies in Utah and elsewhere. He was founder-president of the Salt Lake City Legal Aid Society for 33 years. Lion Skeen was a member of county, state, national and international bar associations.

He maintained an active practice as an attorney right up to his death. When the press of business prevented him from attending 20th anniversary UN conferences four years ago, he complained: "I feel like a coach who couldn't go to the game."

The charter president of the 49-year-old Salt Lake City Lions club, he was elected to the International Board of Directors in 1936-38. Lion Skeen was active on the Board as recently as the 1966-67 year, when he served on the Commemorative Stamp Committee.

Funeral services for Lion Skeen were held in a Salt Lake City Mormon church which he had attended for 45 years. Int. Dir. Alden Briggs and Past Int. Pres. Edward Barry represented the Association.

Lion Skeen is survived by his wife of nearly 60 years, Bertha, and four daughters.