

JOHN HASTINGS

AIDA and AILA

1939 - 2014



John Hastings, who was a co-founder of the Australian Insurance Law Association and a staunch advocate of AIDA, died in April 2014.

AIDA President Michael Gill delivered a eulogy at John's funeral, and also spoke about him at the AIDA Presidential Council meeting in Athens in May 2014.

John was born in 1939 in Gosford. His father was with the Rural Bank of New South Wales and the family moved to Leeton, Junee, Coonamble, Mudgee and finally Penrith.

John attended Mudgee High School, and with a Commonwealth Scholarship, went to Sydney University and earned his Law Degree. On Graduation, he was made a partner in Aitken and Pluck Solicitors, where he worked for about twenty years, until he finally took the step of going solo, which he absolutely loved.

Towards retirement, he moved to Hardings Solicitors and was very happy there, until the progress of Alzheimer's disease forced him to retire.

Apart from the law and his family, John's other great passions were music, opera, and film festivals, his particular interest being silent films. John is survived by his wife Judy and his children Catherine and Peter.

The eulogy delivered by Michael Gill at his funeral follows:

"I found it impossible not to like John.....all the time. I think most people who got to know him, felt the same.

Because it was so clear from the moment you met him that John was a genuine person, someone who loved others, was generous and courteous and honest. He did so many things, not for the reward but because he loved people...of all kinds.

And so today I tell you just a little of John as I knew him in the law and especially insurance law.

Now that itself is a little strange because John would be the first to tell you that he was never an insurance lawyer.

Although we practised and lived not far from each other, we met in London in May 1982 at the World Congress of AIDA, the international insurance law association. We were the only Aussies there. My excuse was I was an insurance lawyer. For John it was another tax-effective opportunity to see the world. We immediately recognised that we had at least one thing in common.

John had attended the World Congress in Madrid in 1978, following which Justice Michael Kirby asked him to help with the review of insurance law by the Australian Law Reform Commission.

In London four years later John and I were asked by the world President of AIDA to establish an Australian chapter of this august international insurance body. Having no idea at all about what we were doing, of course we agreed. I was the first President and John the Secretary. We had a membership of two.

What to do next? Well, back in Australia, lunch seemed like a good idea. We had four or six of them. Good food and wine at my old firma few old friends joined in with their wisdom.....Frank Hoffmann, Syd McDonald, Chris Henri, Robert Owen, Stephen France, Margaret Robertsand AILA was born; the Australian Insurance Law Association.

John was in his element. Not as an insurance lawyer but as a wise counsel, generous contributor, a lover of people and an determined advocate.

I remember so many wonderful occasions. Often there was more noise in the room than wisdom.....and if the Holy Spirit was there, he was certainly wearing ear muffs.

We organised the first seminar in Sydney at which Michael Kirby spoke.

The Sydney group was growing well. John had done the first set of rules. He sorted out our accountant, auditor and taxation. On the latter, he seemed to have far better skills than the rest of us.

But what of the other states? John was keen for us to be on the move. You can recognise the theme.

The history of AILA published on its website speaks of John's role in its national expansion.

- *Victoria*

This branch quickly followed on the establishment in Sydney. Ron Beasley of Weigall and Crowther and Geoff Masel of Phillips Fox were encouraged by John Hastings to establish that branch.

- *Queensland*

John Hastings coordinated the formation of the Queensland branch in 1986 through local lawyer Andy Anderssen.

- *Western Australia*

This branch quickly followed on the establishment in Sydney and Melbourne. John Hastings and Michael Gill coordinated the formation of the West Australian branch through local lawyer Michael Mills.

South Australia was another destination for John; wine opportunities would have been no part of his intent.

I had a message from John Fountain of the South Australian branch earlier this week. I will share some of it with you.

'This is very sad news. I was only thinking about John a few days ago. Apart from being a lovely person, he was instrumental in setting up the SA branch. I still remember clearly him coming over in 1986. ...he came over with someone else - I don't think it was Frank Hoffman (as I'm pretty sure that I'd remember if it was Frank!).'

But John's passport was showing signs of impatience.

We focused on New Zealand, Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia. John was keen and active with all of them. But I think Indonesia had a special place in his heart. He made two special friends, Henri Gunanto and Amaril, who did most of the work in setting it up in 1994.

During the first joint conference with the Indonesians, we learned of their love for karaoke. They suggested a celebration dinner at a karaoke restaurant. We were confident the Australians could match them with a strong rendition of 'Danny Boy' or the like. We knew we were in trouble when the Indonesians turned up with their own sheet music. I recall that singing Danny Boy was not John's strong suit. Perhaps we should have taken them to the opera.

Again, the history on the AILA website records

'Delegates from Australia led by the ever enthusiastic John Hastings played significant roles in encouraging the formation of chapters in Singapore, Indonesia and New Zealand.'

The very successful AIDA World Congress in Sydney in 1994 also benefited from John's unique input and energy.

For John's work for AILA, he was one of the first recipients of Life Membership of AILA.

For his wider work in spreading the aims of the international body, I was proud to present him with the AIDA Medal in New York in 2012....AIDA's highest accolade.

And in all these roles, Judy's presence was a constant. Both forged life-long friendships all over the world. Their good natured exchanges over dinner and during John's driving live with us.

From London, Reg and Shirley Brown spoke to me this week of their great memories of times with John and Judy. John's energetic representation of AILA in every part of the world. The Hastings team enlivening every catch up.

It could be said that for well over thirty years, John worked for AILA and AIDA. Great loyalty and commitment in itself.

But a misunderstanding of John.

For a man whose first love was people and companionship, this was not work. It was a personal gift of all his talents....and in return he enjoyed what was important to him.....friends and companionship, new faces and places and experiences.

When Judy phoned me in Vietnam two weeks ago, I was reading 'Life after Death', by philosopher Deepak Chopra. I had reached a page which included the words of T. S. Eliot from his 'Four Quartets'

*'We shall not cease from exploration
and the end of all our exploring
will be to arrive where we started
and know the place for the first time.'*

John, in our lives you gifted us something both unique and of God's making.....the person you are.

Thank you John. Travel safely. "