

HEALTH FOOD MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION

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MAURICE HANSSEN: OBITUARY

The sudden death of Maurice Hanssen, at the age of 74, has robbed the UK and European health food industries of the prime mover behind the setting up of today's very effective network of trade associations.

Maurice's many friends and colleagues from across the world have also lost a very wise, witty and convivial personality

Maurice's involvement with the Health Food Industry started in the early 1950's after National Service. He rose to the position of Director of Allied Breweries Plc, overseeing the development of dietetic and ethnic foods, wine and health products and then moved to Booker Plc in 1971 where he was responsible for media and government relations relating to herbal medicines, supplements and a wide range of health foods. In 1975, he left to become a highly sought-after independent international consultant, a role he fulfilled for the next thirty years.



Maurice's lasting legacy to the industry started in 1965 when he was elected Founding Chairman of the Health Food Manufacturers' Association. After serving three years as Chairman, his close involvement continued in the role of President, a position to which he was elected annually and unanimously. From its inception, the HFMA was involved in major legislative and regulatory issues and took the lead in both innovative and effective campaigning and in initiating new ideas to enhance the quality and credibility of the industry and its products. Most notably, the HFMA played a major part in winning exemption for Herbal Remedies from the 1968 Medicines Act. A decade later, the HFMA developed its Code of Advertising Practice. In 1985, the HFMA was the first player on the world stage to introduce Upper Safe Levels for vitamins and minerals and, as so often, the original idea was Maurice's. More recently, the HFMA has led major and highly effective campaigns to preserve consumer access to safe, popular products in the face of the Food Supplements Directive.

Early in recognising the potential influence that the Common Market might exert on the health food industry, Maurice was amongst those who, in 1975, formed the EHPM (Federation of European Health Product Manufacturers Associations) of which Maurice became President, then Life President. Today, this is a highly influential Brussels-based body with 26 national member associations.

Not content with these developments, Maurice was also heavily involved in the evolution of the UK Council for Responsible Nutrition whose members tend to be the larger, more mass channel-orientated companies. Naturally, both CRN and HFMA are leading members of the EHPM.

Maurice also played a major role in bringing together industry associations across the globe for the inaugural meeting of IADSA (International Alliance of Dietary/Supplement Associations) in 1997. Throughout his career, Maurice was a tireless worker in encouraging all associations to tackle the many difficulties facing them with skill and imagination and, at the core, with a concern to balance the principles of overriding consumer safety, high product quality, and consumer choice.

If industry and consultancy work were not enough, Maurice was also a prolific author. "E for Additives" has been hugely influential ever since publication in 1986 and over one million copies of the book have been sold. Together, Maurice's 27 other titles sold over 1.5 million copies between them. Maurice also appeared frequently on radio and television, wrote extensively for specialist and national newspapers and magazines as well as the scientific press, and was always keen to spread the word about good nutrition in lectures and seminars. Notwithstanding all this activity, Maurice nurtured his enjoyment of fine food and wine and good company.

Maurice's legacy to the health food trade was best encapsulated at the HFMA's 40th Anniversary Lunch in June of this year at which Maurice was able to point to the continued progress of the organisation to 300 legislators, regulators, scientists, media figures and industry leaders whose very presence testified to the truth of his message and the relevance of his vision.

Maurice is survived by his wife, Jan, his son Carl and Carl's five children.

Penny Viner writes: "I am fortunate enough to have known and worked with Maurice for many years, both as friend and colleague: first via my late husband and Weleda's HFMA membership, then as HFMA Chairman, and latterly as HFMA Director. He was a marvellous man - at the same time brilliant, (a mine of information, rightly proud of his 'butterfly mind'), maddening, funny, kind, thoughtful - an excellent companion and the ultimate bon viveur who, to my mind, rightly thought that life needs a little fun. I shall miss him greatly."

Martin Last writes: "I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to know Maurice and to be able to call him a friend. In his company one would feel inspired, not only by his joy of life but by the passion he had for everything he undertook. His knowledge and experience was truly amazing and the way in which he helped guide us as individuals and as an industry to help combat the many challenges, was remarkable. I am proud of his successes and in the way in which he achieved them, with calmness, dignity, enthusiasm, a keen sense of fun and with a unique style that was simply 'Maurice'. I will miss him."

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