



friends and supporters update

september 2009

TRIBUTES TO BILL PORTER



Bill Porter, ICF's Founder, died in le Touquet on 1st April 2009. A family funeral was held there on 4th April, and a memorial service took place in St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London on 11th June. At the service the Sarajevo Commitment was read by former BBC newscaster Martyn Lewis. Gordon Graham and ICF President Bernard Margueritte spoke movingly about Bill. A summary of Bernard's tribute is over the page.

Obituaries appeared in several newspapers including the Times and Independent. Details of these and other tributes are on the ICF web site at www.icforum.org. Rajmohan Gandhi, the current International President of IofC, wrote:

'...We had grown accustomed to and dependent on Bill's fighting spirit, his wit, his resilience. He loved the media but demanded high standards from it, and he demanded them with such charm that editors the world over thanked him for his pressure. His faith communicated itself to others because it was so honest and also so unconquerable -- it was the complete confidence of one who wore his vulnerability on his sleeve but kept God firmly in his heart...'

Bill Porter was honoured in a short service in the Caux Conference garden on Monday July 27. Thirty friends gathered by the Swiss flag on a sunny afternoon to remember with appreciation his ebullient, faith-filled personality.



*Bill Porter's friends gather to remember him
Caux, 27 July 2009*

CAUX JULY 2009

The aim of the conference on ***Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy*** held in Caux from July 24-28 was to challenge the global economy to be based on honest dealings. The media's role in this endeavour was examined alongside other aspects of the world economy including business practice, food sustainability and the input of young professionals. Media Workstream Discussion Groups, supported by the ICF, brainstormed the issues. A full report is available on our web site, www.icforum.org.

Mike Jempson, Director, Mediawise, drawing on his 30 year's experience as a journalist, discussed 'Investigative journalism – a two edged sword?' He viewed it as a valuable tool – although dangerous to those with the courage to do it. Hundreds of journalists have been intimidated and killed in its pursuit. He declared, 'Information with a public interest should never be sold'.

Simon Cohen, MD Global Tolerance, addressed the challenge of financial pressure on true journalism. He saw no problem in journalism surviving the credit crunch if journalists used their imagination to find positive angles in their stories. He instanced an experience his company had on the 10th Anniversary of 9/11. Instead of relying on countless images of the Twin Towers, they organised an event in London to mark the 100th anniversary that day, of Mahatma Gandhi's launch of Satyagraha, the non-violent resistance to British rule. Permission was granted by Madame Tussaud's to borrow their waxwork model of Gandhi. A hundred young people stood next to this statue outside St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in the city of London. The story got international coverage.

The Rev Bob Chase, founding director of the New York-based multicultural Intersections initiative, focussed on media's chance to build a sustainable world. He was particularly struck by the concern of an IT teacher from UK. She reported that when her students, were asked if they considered what they viewed on the Internet as being accurate and true, they replied in the affirmative. This raised for him the very real challenge as to how to educate children from their earliest years on how to evaluate everything they view on line. They are shown to be terribly susceptible to perverting influences. Action to overcome this needs defining and implementing.



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MEMORIAL FUND

The effort of the ICF to be a catalyst for deeper commitment goes on. It doesn't proceed without some degree of sacrifice and tangible resource. We have launched a fund in memory of Bill Porter and his wife, Sonja, who inspired him to "do something about it" and found the ICF. Two action points to further Bill's heritage are outlined below.

We send heartfelt thanks to all those who have already contributed. Any wishing to contribute now will be deeply appreciated.

Cheques in £UK or € payable to ICF Limited should be sent to the address below.

Checks in £US payable to ICF-America Inc (tax deductible for US taxpayers) should be sent to *Mr Robert Webb, 5850 Cameron Run, Apt 1511, Alexandria, VA 22303, USA.*

BILL PORTER'S HERITAGE

A Book...

In the weeks before he died Bill Porter began work on a book that would bring together the thinking on media ethics that his many friends had expressed in a variety of ways – in conversation, forum presentations and workshops at media schools. In planning the book, he wrote the first paragraph of the Introduction:

"We are not editing this work because we know it all, anymore than doctors have to suffer from every illness to know how to treat them. We are also editing it within the range of the media people whom we have met or have a good contact with... Nevertheless there is an ideological selectivity with our writers in that we believe them all to believe in the importance and practice of ethical values in their work and that of the profession as a whole..."

We are delighted that Professor Richard Keeble of Lincoln University, and editor of Ethical Space, the journal of the Institute of Communications Ethics, has agreed to edit the book, which we hope will be published in the summer of 2010

Bill's papers...

Bill has left us his meticulous ICF papers – an archive of correspondence since the foundation of the ICF - and we are seeing how best to preserve this invaluable source for posterity and for potential researchers into media ethics.

ICF PRESIDENT'S TRIBUTE TO BILL PORTER

An extract from the tribute to Bill Porter given by Bernard Margueritte at Bill's memorial service

My encounter with Bill Porter was undoubtedly set up by Divine Providence. I met in Warsaw Mike Lowe. Knowing that we were going to Cambridge, USA, he gave me the names of Bryan and Anne Hamlin. It was at a dinner in their house in 1994 that I met Bill for the first time. Bill had this incredible charisma found very rarely: being with him you had immediately the feeling that you can totally trust him, that everything in him is genuine. You could feel that you are with him touching the core of the matter. At the end of this Cambridge dinner I knew that my life will be thereafter linked with Bill.

He spoke as many others about the need for honest media as pillars of democracy, building a new covenant in a world desperately in need of a new humanism. Many are saying such things. Well, when it was said by Bill those words took immediately another dimension.

It was always strange for me to hear Bill pretending so long that he was a "lapsed agnostic". He was in fact the most religious person among us. He was all the time completing God's work. God was in him and he was in God. Bill was a man on a mission.

Bill is also a symbol for every one of us that everything is always possible in life, at any point in life. Bill had a full and interesting life, but truly his work to build and expand the ICF was the work of his life, the new life he found indeed at 70.

One so touching characteristic of Bill was that he was always looking forward, planning ahead. I have no doubt that now Bill is still planning the future of the ICF, looking to help us achieve our common goals.

One thing is sure: no matter the difficulties, we have to continue Bill's work!

Bill had also a remarkable, deliciously British, if I may say so, sense of humour. One day when we were travelling by car in the north of France, he told me suddenly: "you know, Bernard, I was not a bad man after all; I will probably end up in heaven; but I don't know if I should. I am not sure I will meet there many of my friends!" Well, Bill, let me hope that someday after all we will meet you there, in the Joy and Glory of God!

Our team in Greencoat Place, London

Our team in London manages the activities of the British chapter and also administers many of the ICF's worldwide activities. This involves running our web site, managing our contact database, sending out information about events both in the UK and elsewhere, including invitations to media participation in Caux each year, and where possible supporting the expenses of our President in his ICF work.

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