

In memory of Harry Banks



Friends,

As President of the International Olympic Committee I knew Harry Banks as an official and a devoted supporter of everything to do with the ideals of amateur sport. We were about the same age and, as you know, he was educated at the Fulham Secondary School and at the Institut Français. He began his life as a banker at the Banque Belge pour l'Étranger, to which he was attached from 1935 until 1947, although during this period he served with the East Surrey Regiment during the War and afterwards...

Harry Banks' contribution was always very quiet and discreet and always added with a sense of humour. His temperament, I think, did more to contribute towards harmony, not only amongst the members of the IOC, who are represented here today, but amongst others, the National Olympic Committees, which are also represented, and in the International Federations both those which take part in the programme of the Games and those which are trying to be included...

From an Olympic point of view, during his time he had to deal with three or four very important points—one was the whole unresolved question of eligibility and the status of the amateur sportsman, and he worked very carefully with us when we re-drafted the new Rules. We had to look at the programme of the future Olympic Games. His contributions were tremendous, well balanced and positive, and for this he is known not only amongst us here today who knew him, but throughout the world among all IFs and NOCs. He was also the Director responsible for the Medical Commission which, on the scientific side, has contributed so much to the development of the medical aspect of sport. He was also responsible for the technical side and the co-ordination of the Games and was co-ordinating at the moment of his death the technical brochures for the 1980 Games in Moscow and Lake Placid...

In a far from perfect world let us in the Olympic movement endeavour to promote what we have in common, and not our differences. It is not easy, but men such as Harry Banks contributed both with integrity and enthusiasm. He was a loyal member of the staff and I personally have lost a friend.

*Lord Killanin,
President of the IOC.*

On the evening of Thursday 16th February last, Harry Banks was not feeling well. Realising that the next day he might not be able to go to Vidy, he telephoned his personal secretary, asking her to come to his home in the morning. Awakening early on 17th February, he had the will-power to prepare for his work. Scarcely finished he fell, stricken. The most abrupt disappearance. At least he did not suffer.

Such was the end of an existence full of effort, perseverance and success. He was born on 11th June 1914. He had worked all his life. If during a flash of lightning he relived his passage on earth, Harry had reasons to be proud of himself. His nomination to the post of Technical Director of the IOC was the completion of a long and courageous career.

Our friend Harry Banks will ever remain in our memories and in our hearts-with his outstanding professional qualities, his perpetual kindness, his friendly smile, the warmth of his blue eyes. We find it hard to accept that he has left us. He was so much a part of our life, one vital and precious backbone to our Olympic family.

Harry was cremated in Lausanne on 22nd February and a memorial service was held in London on 7th March, at which services Lord Rupert Nevill, representing Prince Philip ; Lord Killanin, the Marquess of Exeter, Lord Luke, the Prince de Méode and Mr. Raymond Gafner, for the IOC members ; Mrs. Inger K. Frith, Mr. Thomas Keller, Colonel Rudyard H. Russell, Messrs. Charles S. Palmer, John Holt, Bernard Boulens and Nigel Hacking, for the International Federations; many representatives of the British Olympic Association ; and his many friends from all horizons came to pay their last respects and offer their sympathies to his family.

On the previous page we publish extracts of the address given by Lord Killanin in London and opposite Colonel Russell's tribute.

Monique Berlioux

Harry first came to me in the autumn of 1948, soon after the Olympic Games in London. The Association Internationale de Boxe Amateur had only been founded two years earlier and was still in its early stages, but it was expanding and I needed someone to help me build it up...

I was then the Secretary-Treasurer but our President was French, and so it was important to have someone in the administration who spoke French and Harry was bilingual...

I found him a room in my law office at Lincoln's Inn, London, and there, in daily contact, we became close friends and colleagues. His good humour, his initiative and his dedication to work made him an ideal deputy who in my absence was able to take charge and proceed...

Our close association during 25 years included travelling together all over the world, to congresses, executive meetings, Olympics, continental championships and Commonwealth Games, and his pleasing personality and great abilities brought him friends and supporters wherever he went. To me he always remained the most delightful companion.

In 1959, our French President, Emile Gremaux, died and I succeeded him as President. At our next Congress in 1960, the office of the Secretary-Treasurer was abolished and the post of Administrative Secretary created, to which Harry was immediately appointed and this he held with ability and distinction until his retirement in 1973...

Our sympathy goes out to his widow, Dorothy, and his children, Richard and Sarah, who are just completing their education...

As for me, I have lost a close friend and a valued colleague whose name will always be remembered with respect and affection by all members of the AIBA.

Rudyard H. Russell,
President Emeritus of the AIBA

