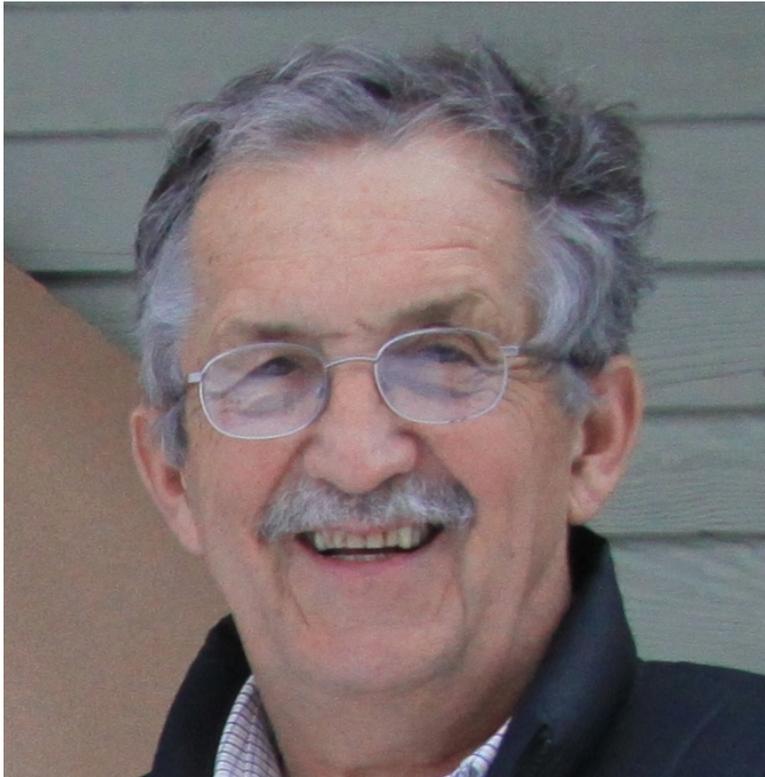


The passing away of a Great Friend of Ethiopia: John Baigent



John Baigent, co-founder of Partners, the original Executive Director from 2001 to 2012 and served as a board member until the last few months of before he passed away.

It is with sadness and a broken heart that we announce the passing of John Baigent peacefully on Saturday, December 3rd, 2016 at his farm in Enderby, BC, Canada surrounded by his family. He was 75 years old and fought a long heroic battle with Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML) with the constant care of his wife, Woinshet Bayssie and support from all of his 6 children (Kevin, Marty, Andrew, Spring, Joey and Tigist), his 8 grandchildren and a very few others close to him in whom he had confided. John was the co-founder of ***Partners in the Horn of Africa*** that operated in Ethiopia for 16 years completed over 400 projects. John was the original Executive Director from 2001 to 2012 and was still a member of the Board. Partners in the Horn of Africa are the culmination of John's 50 year love affair with Africa that started with two years as a Canadians Universities Students Overseas (CUSO) volunteer teacher in Ghana.

John Baigent and I (Mekonen) met in August of 1988 during John's visit to Khartoum, Sudan. John travelled from his World University Service of Canada (WUSC) office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to conduct an orientation to African refugee students before immigrating to Canada. I was one of those fortunate refugee students sponsored by WUSC in attendance because not only did he have an impact on my personal life as a good friend but also the life of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians.



John grew up in Toronto (for which he never quite forgave his parents) with an English Canadian Dad (Murray) and a French Canadian Mom (Suzanne). After graduating with B.A. from Loyola College, now Concordia, John headed to Ghana for two years of teaching high school as a CUSO volunteer, an experience that shaped his life forever.

This was followed by a year in Ottawa running CUSO's West Africa program. Then law school (Dalhousie and Harvard) before moving to British Columbia in 1970 and practicing labor law in Vancouver for 20 years. John practiced law representing working people for many years and worked on several cases citing the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) [*The Charter guarantees certain political rights to Canadian citizens and civil rights of everyone in Canada from the policies and actions of all areas and levels of the government.*]

Finally, founding and running Partners in the Horn of Africa (PIHA), a Canadian aid organization based in Enderby, BC, Canada and focused on Ethiopia where Ethiopians were 'partners' in projects they chose for their communities. John spent a good part of the last 15 years living and working in Ethiopia, a country he loved and whose culture and people he greatly admired a land where he learnt about true “civilization” from the people of Ethiopia.



In 2001, John proposed a system by which communities shared the project costs by supplying some of the necessary resources. It was seeking to harmonize, align, and create recipient ownership by building new partnerships. This led to the founding of PIHA. John worked determinedly to develop PIHA’s core principles, building the organization from the ground up. Donors enthusiastically supported John’s organization in part because of his reputation, but also because of its inclusive approach to addressing needs. Community “buy-in” to projects helped support participatory democracy and create a sense of ownership of the projects. Simply put, it is a hand up not a hand out. You can visit the summary of the projects PARTNERS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA completed:

- [PROJECT SUMMARY 2016](#),
- [PROJECT SUMMARY 2015](#), and
- [PROJECT SUMMARY 2014](#)
- John Speaking at the inauguration of a footbridge that spans (2.5m wide) the Gilgel Abay River (aka the Blue Nile River) with two spans of **46m & 48m** separated by an island. Watch the video: [Gilgel Abay - Bridge Over The River Nile](#)

Through the work of PIHA, John dedicated himself to improving the lives of many people otherwise condemned to a life of disease, poverty and misery by focusing on the areas of greatest need such as infrastructure improvement, health & welfare, and women’s anti-poverty projects. PIHA focuses its efforts in more remote areas of Ethiopia often ignored by other NGO’s. John’s kind disposition and his diligent efforts resulted in the successful recruitment of board members that donated their time, money, and expertise.

In THE PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLE, the purpose is Empowering People, Lowering Costs. Each African community partner (usually an indigenous charity or a village) contributes 15 to 20% of project costs, a hallmark of PIHA. 100% of all donations go directly to aid projects in Africa, a rare practice for NGO’s.

The “partnership” principle was intended to empower people so that one day Ethiopians would no longer need assistance. That end goal required communities to be actively involved in prioritizing their needs and then to play a major role in meeting those needs. To test this part of PIHA’s model, it was started with two villages near Agarfa of Bale Mountains of South Eastern Ethiopia by building the first footbridge that expanded to different parts of Ethiopia.

Anyone who met John would know his sense of humor, his laugh, his passion for the people and country of Ethiopia, his determination to provide a good life for his family. John was fun to be around, as he always listened and had a thoughtful response. Although we will miss him greatly, John had accomplished a life of serving humanity more than one could dream of:

- John was the recipient of the 2009 Dalhousie Law School of Dalhousie University [Weldon Award for Unselfish Public Service](#) for his volunteer work in Africa and his commitment to the plight of the people of Ethiopia.
- John was to be honored at the by His Excellency the **Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada** by awarding him [Canada Meritorious Service Medal \(MSM\)](#), on December 8, 2016. He passed away on December 3, 2016 but he was aware of the award before he passed away.

John left us with a quote from Oliver Sachs: *'My predominant feeling is one of gratitude. I have loved and been loved. I have been given much and I have given something in return.'*

John Baigent has inspired many to help improve the lives of others in this world and I hope his life story will further inspire others in the future. John will be missed.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 4, 2017 at the Riverside Community Hall on Trinity Valley Road, 10km East of Enderby, BC, Canada

Read more on the:

<http://partnersinthehorn.org/john-baigent-obituary/>

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