

A Celebration of the Life of Ian Symonds, MNZM (2 January 1937 – 12 September 2016)

It is with great sadness that I share with you that our dear Friend and Colleague Ian Symonds passed away on September 12th of this year.

Ian was an indispensable member of the IMIA board during my presidency from 1992 to 1995.



I have asked his wife Judy to join me in presenting you with a short obituary which is indeed a celebration of a life that was so well lived and one that gave so much to so many!

Those of us who served with him also know that his wife Judy was always at his side and indeed an “honorary member” of our IMIA board.

IMIA has lost a very special man in Ian Symonds. It is with much honor and privilege that Judy Symonds and I write something that tries to encapsulate what Ian has contributed as a fellow of IMIA, secretary

to the IMIA board for many years. His contribution to IMIA spans over decades and certainly he helped put New Zealand (NZ) on the International Medical Informatics map.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to be Ian’s friend, know that when Ian took on a role, he fully committed to giving it his all.

He in fact was the representative for NZ on the Medical Informatics Association Executive for 30 years and was International Secretary for six years. The contributions Ian made to the IMIA nursing community were seminal. With his support, behind the scenes, the IMIA nursing community had one of the most successful early Nursing Informatics Special Interest Group meeting in New Zealand! His contributions, in addition, included his constant participations in IMIA’s activities at MEDINFOS, as well as being an active member of IMIA’s Senior Officer’s Club. He was made an Honorary Fellow in recognition of his vision and outstanding contributions to IMIA in Rome, Italy, in 2003.

When you think of Ian, you readily think of words such as loyal, hard-working, committed, kind, and generous. If you were Ian’s friend, you would know what a loyal and genuine friend he was. He was a great mentor, who found true pleasure in seeing the people he had supported, achieve. Ian was always happy to give of his time and in his own quiet but direct way a master of constructive criticism. Ian taught us not to waste words and always focus on the heart of the argument – invaluable advice. His role as IMIA secretary during my presidency served us well in that the accuracy of his reporting was invaluable in future references needed.

Judy has shared some additional recognitions of Ian in New Zealand that attests to his well lived life.

In 2009, Ian received the New Zealand Order of Merit (“MNZM”) for services to the community in recognition of his work and as a member and former chairman of the Scots College Board of Governors and the Scots College Foundation. He is to be inducted into the Garden of Honour at Scots College, his old school. Ian was also on the Queen Margaret College’s Board of Governors and a representative on the Independent Schools Council in Wellington New Zealand. This accolade reflects the kind of service Ian gave without hesitation.

Ian’s funeral service concluded with his photo on the screen and the caption “a gentle-man”. This could not more aptly sum up Ian. Ian’s mantra to fully enjoy life was described by his daughter-in-law, Rachel, when she paraphrased a reading Ian had sent her that reminded us all to use as many of the 86,400 seconds life gives us every-day, as in the bank of time what you lose each day cannot be recovered the next day.

Throughout his years as a member of IMIA and in his retirement Ian kept in touch with his IMIA friends and colleagues, always supported by his devote wife Judy, who we all got to know so well and admire as she stood by the side of her beloved Ian.

Judy and Ian travelled extensively, have a close network of good friends and supportive family, and shared many experiences which are proving a firm foundation for wonderful memories.

Ian Symonds, we have lost a true “gentle-man”, but we thank you for the opportunity to have worked with you as a fellow member of IMIA and to have you as our special friend.

Ian will live on in our memories with the most fondness and love.

Marion Ball and Judy Symonds