

John Louis Marden, CBE, JP

The 8th Governor of Rotary International District 345

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The Honourable John Louis Marden (馬登), CBE, JP (12 February 1919, England - 18 March 1999, Hong Kong) enjoyed many Rotary activities offered to boys when his father “Gem” George Ernest Marden was a member and later President 1928-1929 of Shanghai Rotary Club (上海扶輪社) in China. Following his father’s road to Rotary, John joined the Hong Kong Rotary Club (香港扶輪社) and served as its President in 1964-1965. Two years later, he was elected the 8th Governor of District 345 of Rotary International in 1967-1968 with the global theme: “Make Your Rotary Membership Effective” (發揮你們扶輪的效能). The District 345 territory then was compiled with The Republic of China (Taiwan), the British Crown Colony Hong Kong, and the Portuguese Territory Macao.



John Louis Marden, an entrepreneur and philanthropist, was born in England. His parents brought him to Shanghai of China when was one-year-old in 1919. He received elementary education in Cathedral School (座堂男校/英童公學), Holy Trinity Cathedral (聖三一座堂), Shanghai International Settlement (上海公共租界). In 1931, he received his education in Gresham’s School, Holt, Norfolk, England, before going up to Cambridge University where he studied law at Trinity College from 1937 to 1940. Upon graduation he was commissioned into the Royal Horse Artillery, seeing action in North Africa and the D-Day landings. After his education, John joined his father’s firm in 1946 as a trainee on secretarial and shipping division before he was transferred to the insurance department. His commercial training started with a spell with the Blue Funnel Line in Liverpool, then with his father’s London office. In 1947 he and his new bride Anne Harris came to Hong Kong by Sunderland flying boat to begin learning the ropes in his father’s business.

In 1952, John became a director of the company. He succeeded his father as the chairman of Wheelock Marden & Co., Ltd. (會德豐有限公司), as known as “taipan” in 1959. Having inherited his father’s commercial instincts, he expanded property investment into an even more important activity for the group than the ongoing shipping interests. He was also one of the driving forces behind the creation of the Cross-Harbour Tunnel (香港海底隧道) under the Victoria Harbour, which opened in 1972. As the chairman of one of the leading firms in Hong Kong, he sat on the boards of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (香港上海滙豐銀行), Dairy Farm (牛奶公司), and Hong Kong Electric Company (香港電燈有限公司), among many others. He was also an Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong (香港立法局非官守議員) for a very brief period of time in 1971, and held a life appointment of the Unofficial Justice of Peace for Hong Kong (香港非官守太平紳士). In recognition of his distinguished public services, John was decorated Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.) in 1976 by Queen Elizabeth II, United Kingdom.

John was appointed by Sir Crawford Murray MacLehose, Hong Kong Governor (香港總督麥理浩爵士), to serve as Chairman 1976-1987 of The Council of the Order of St. John in Hong Kong. By virtue of the 《Order of St. John Ordinance Chapter 1047》 in the Laws of Hong Kong, the Council was the governing body of the St. John Ambulance Organization, responsible for policy making, fund raising, allocation of resources, and providing support and co-ordination of the functions of the St. John Ambulance Association and Brigade.

John was called “the taipan among the taipans” by former Acting Hong Kong Governor Sir David Akers-Jones (鍾逸傑爵士). As the last of the great British taipans when he sold his stake in Wheelock Marden. After a complicated and at times bitter battle for control, he retired from business in 1985. The new owner emerged as Hong Kong shipping magnate Sir Yue-Kong Pao (包玉剛爵士). During his later years in business, and increasingly following his retirement, John undertook a programme of philanthropy, principally through the Marden Foundation, which is continued by his wife Anne. Among the most visible results of this programme in Hong Kong are a dozen pre-vocational schools, construction of which the Mardens funded. They also financed the building of the swimming pool at Hong Kong Island School; John declared it open on 15 June 1973 by jumping in, fully clothed.

The Honourable John Louis Marden, CBE, JP, passed away on 18 March 1999 at his home in Shek O (石澳), Hong Kong Island, aged 80. He was survived by his wife Anne with one son and three daughters. (see family photo on Page 4)





17 July 1977 -- John L. Marden (center), Chairman of the Council of the Order of St. John in Hong Kong, officiating at the opening ceremony of an ambulance station, accompanying by Daniel Koo Shing-Cheung (left 1), President of the Mainland Area of the St. John Ambulance Brigade.



8 July 1978 -- John L. Marden, Chairman of the Council of the Order of St. John in Hong Kong, shaking hands with Daniel Koo Shing-Cheung (right), President of the Mainland Area of the St. John Ambulance Brigade, at the donation ceremony of a van.

Daniel Koo Shing-Cheung (古勝祥) was later President 1984-1985 of Hong Kong Island West Rotary Club (香港西區扶輪社).

List of some companies with which John L. Marden was associated

Chairman and Director

The Hong Kong Rope Manufacturing Co., Ltd.; Austrian & Continental Engineers Ltd.

Director

Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (香港上海滙豐銀行); Dairy Farm (牛奶公司); Hong Kong Electric Company (香港電燈有限公司); John D. Hutchinson & Co., Ltd. (和記洋行有限公司); International Investment Corporation; The Hong Kong & China Gas Co., Ltd. (香港中華煤氣有限公司); Harriman Realty Co., Ltd.; Wheelock Marden & Co., Ltd.; Hong Kong Rolling Mills Ltd.; Hong Kong Realty & Trust Co., Ltd.; Far Eastern Prospecting & Development Corporation Ltd.; Far East Flying Training School Ltd.; Far East Aviation Co., Ltd.; Fagan (HK) Ltd.; Eastern Asia Navigation Co., Ltd.; Aircraft (China) Ltd.; Allied Investors Corporation Ltd.



Mrs. Anne Harris Marden, MBE, BBS, JP

The couple founded the Marden Foundation (馬登基金) for the charity works in Hong Kong. Mrs. Anne Marden was a dedicated philanthropist who, for over 7 decades, had been committed to supporting education in Hong Kong and creating educational opportunities for children with disabilities and from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

In 1960, Anne was appointed Director of the Hong Kong Red Cross and led the building and running of the Princess Alexandra Red Cross Residential School (香港紅十字會雅麗珊郡主學校). During the 1970s, three Marden Foundation Schools were built, with Anne working closely with Caritas and the then Education Department of the Government.

As a member of the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation (香港復康會), Anne worked to establish the Rehabaid Centre and had remained as a Governing Committee member of the Rehabaid Society (復康資源協會).

She was a Founding Member of two charitable organizations dedicated to supporting the developmental well-being of children – TREATS and Playright Children's Play Association (智樂兒童遊樂協會). She was also the Honorary President of Playright.

At the University of Hong Kong (香港大學) (HKU), Anne actively and long-standing supported the Faculty of Education. She funded an annual Marden Foundation Visiting Fellowship in Education from 1991 to 2004, which brought distinguished visitors to HKU and significantly enhanced their research and community profile. She was an esteemed friend of the Faculty, and paid attendance at many Faculty functions, including the important occasion of the Faculty's 20th anniversary and its annual Graduation Ceremony.

In 2007, Anne was conferred an Honorary University Fellow by HKU.

Anne had been a Justice of the Peace for Hong Kong since 1973. Anne received the Caltex Community Service Award in 1990. In recognition to her remarkable service to the community, she was decorated in 1991 Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.) by Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.

Anne was also deeply caring for the underprivileged, especially the marginalized groups, in the society, and her passion and contribution towards the social development of Hong Kong. Anne had been supporting Action for REACH OUT (AFRO) (青鳥) since early years, as a member and the patron. AFRO was officially established in 1993. It is the first sex workers' support group in Hong Kong, a non-governmental and a charitable organization. AFRO endeavours to offer adequate services and support to women working in the sex industry in Hong Kong, including those who are from Hong Kong, Chinese Mainland, Thailand, and the Philippines, etc.

Anne was conferred in 2006 Bronze Bauhinia Star by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region.

Mrs. Anne Harris Marden, MBE, BBS, JP, passed away in Hong Kong on 31 May 2022 at her age of 96.



Mrs. Anne Marden, Director of the British Red Cross Hong Kong Branch, advocated for rights of children and marginalized groups. (Photo credit: Marden Family)



Mrs. Anne Marden, Director of the British Red Cross Hong Kong Branch, lent helping hands to the refugee relief. (Photo credit: Marden Family)