



Mr. John D Hicks

June 26, 1930 - June 20, 2017

John D. Hicks, who enjoyed traveling and was founder of the Dundalk travel agency, Going Places, died Tuesday from complications of prostate cancer at Stella Maris Hospice.

The longtime Homeland resident was 86.

"He knew the business and loved to travel and sell travel," said Susan Bittner, who began her career 43 years ago at Going Places as a receptionist and is now manager. "I've been here since the get-go and I learned from the very best. I've been very lucky."

"He was very well-educated, worldly, well-read, and theater was his passion," said Scott Babus who went to work for the agency 22 years ago. "He was always our support, and to use a travel analogy, captain of the ship. Our guiding principle was always, 'What would Mr. Hicks do in this situation?'"

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"His employees loved him and he loved teaching them the travel business," said his daughter, Emily B. Hicks of Federal Hill, who for three years has been president and owner of the business. "There is very little staff turnover with many of his employees having worked there 40, 30 or at least 20 years."

Notable Marylanders who died in June 2017

A list of notable Marylanders who died in June 2017.

The son of John Alfred Hicks, an entrepreneur, and Teresa Britton, a homemaker, John David Hicks was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, and graduated there from St. Ignatius High School.

After obtaining a bachelor's degree in 1951 from what is now John Carroll University in University Heights, Ohio, Mr. Hicks enlisted in the Army and served in the infantry.

A son, Adam J. Hicks, of New York City, noted in a profile of his father's life a memorable incident that occur during his service. He said his father's "unintentional firing of a bazooka backwards during basic training did not go over so well with certain sergeants."

While working at an Army induction center in Seattle, a fellow recruit suggested that Mr. Hicks get a job with United Airlines.

"He put the seed in my mind," Mr. Hicks told The Dundalk Eagle in a 2013 interview.

United Airlines was not hiring at the time but Pan American World Airways was, so in 1956 he began his career in the travel industry.

After marrying in 1963, he left Pan Am and moved to Baltimore where he subsequently worked for Travel Guide and Bon Voyage Travel. In 1973, he established Going Places on the lower level of Eastpoint Mall.

"I felt it was time to open my own," he said in The Eagle article.

Opening at Eastpoint Mall proved to be a propitious business decision for Mr. Hicks. Someone had advised him that the Bethlehem Steelworkers who lived in the area — and whose children were now raised and gone — had the yearn to travel and the disposable income to make it a reality.

"He also brought a man's perspective to travel," Mr. Babus said.

Eventually, Mr. Hicks expanded the business to six offices. Today, in addition to the original agency, there is one other Going Places at Southdale Shopping Center in Glen Burnie.

Mr. Hicks told The Dundalk Eagle that one of is secrets to longevity was his agency's non-

reliance on commercial and airline travel. Going Places "always catered to vacation travel."

When airlines began to lose money after the Sept. 11, 2001 World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, they stopped paying commissions to travel agents which resulted in many agencies going out of business.

"We weren't just dependent on airline tickets," he explained in the 2013 interview. "We never relied on commercial accounts, so when they stopped commissions on airline tickets, it didn't hurt us."

While competition from Expedia and Travelocity took away some customers who were able to plan vacations online, others remained because of the human element — and the fact they could put a vacation on a layaway plan.

"The customers loved him and he loved them," Ms. Bittner said. "He had a great sense of humor and I never saw him angry."

His humor often made its way into the workplace.

"He'd be on the phone and would look at me and say, 'Someone is interested in an Hawaiian trip.' That was the cue for me to put on a cassette of Hawaiian music," recalled Ms. Bittner with a laugh. "And then after he made the sale, he'd say, 'Works every time.'"

Mr. Hicks' personal favorite travel destinations included Europe, the Caribbean and New York City, where he maintained an apartment.

"He enjoyed going to Alaska and Mackinac Island in Michigan. He even enjoyed going to Cleveland to see relatives," Mr. Babus said.

Though he retired three years ago, he continued coming into the office and kept his hand in the operation, Ms. Hicks said.

His philanthropic efforts included participation in charities operating in Central America, "an area of the world that piqued his interest after traveling to Nicaragua in the 1980s," his son wrote.

He enjoyed listening to classical music, visiting art galleries, collecting American art and playing his piano. During his frequent visits to New York City he attended Broadway

shows, the Metropolitan Opera and ballet.

"He really was a very simple man. He loved his apartment in New York and going to Mass every day," Ms. Hicks said.

Mr. Hicks was a communicant at St. Mary of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church, 5502 York Road, Govans, where a Mass of Christian burial will be offered at 10 a.m. Monday.

In addition to his son and daughter, Mr. Hicks is survived by two other sons, David B. Hicks of Ellicott City and Jay A. Hicks of Denver; and four grandchildren. A marriage to the former Mary Margaret "Krocket" Krichton ended in divorce.

frasmussen@baltsun.com

Events

JUN **Visitation** 03:00PM - 06:00PM

25

Mitchell - Wiedefeld Funeral Home, Inc.
6500 York Road, Baltimore, MD, US, 21212

JUN **Funeral Service** 10:00AM

26

St. Mary of the Assumption
5502 York Road, Baltimore, MD, US, 21212

Comments



“ We at Casa Baltimore/Limay didn't know about John's passing until this last Saturday. Today's mass at St. Mary's was quite meaningful. John's caring for and dedication to the people of San Juan de Limay was so admirable. We remember with fondness the delegation in, I believe, 1988, he made bringing Adam. That was a delegation as other supporters brought their children, too. I believe John attended one of our local Casa Baltimore/Limay events last year and it was great to see him. Our sympathies and prayers are with the family. Your dad will be sorely missed.

Carol Berman - June 26, 2017 at 04:08 PM



“ Dear Hicks Family,

May all of the wonderful memories you have of your loved one and the ones friends share with you of John bring you comfort at this difficult time. I was honored to have met him and am sorry to have missed the memorial. However, I was doing what he loved, traveling and thought of him yesterday.

Warmest heartfelt condolences,

Susan Gaines - BDM from AMResorts

Susan Gaines - June 26, 2017 at 09:55 AM



“ JoAnn Stelmack lit a candle in memory of Mr. John D Hicks



JoAnn Stelmack - June 25, 2017 at 08:10 AM



“ John Hicks was an incredible man. He loved life to the fullest, and everyone loved him. I first met John in January, 1972 when I applied for a position with him at Diners Fugazy Travel, later to be known as Bon Voyage Travel on Cold Spring Lane. I remember the interview well, being very nervous, sitting there in my plaid uniform and saddle shoes. Mr. Hicks had called the business department at the Institute of Notre Dame to hire his employees. I think I had more questions for him than he had for me; I didn't even know what a travel agency was! He hired me to write airline tickets. No computers back then. I still have a bump on my finger because you had to press hard to go through all the copies. He was a patient teacher, and taught me all the ins and outs of the travel business. But, he taught me more than that. He taught me life long skills that I still use to this day.

I helped him open the Eastpoint agency, Clipper Travel in 1973, and remember my dad helping him to repaint the office before we moved in. I also remember the red shag carpet! We did very well that 1st year, and continued to hire more employees. Once again, he called IND to hire our next employee. A bubbly, blonde haired, Susan Friesner, a Dundalk resident, was our next employee. An employee to this day, 43 years later Susan Bittner, is a testament to John's leadership. While being a successful full service travel agency, he had expanded to Glen Burnie, Pratt Street, and White Marsh hiring more and more employees; Donna, Michele, Penny, David, Daisy, Angela and more. I remember he and I would drive in his station wagon with the brown, wooden sides to the Glen Burnie location to deliver supplies. One day we purchased a brand new, electronic typewriter. That was high tech back then.

He was always good to his employees taking us to the Lyric to see The Nutcracker and out to dinner to Tio Pepi's for Christmas. We would also be invited to parties at his house where he and his family welcomed us with a gracious dinner from soup to nuts. We always had a good time talking with his children, Emily, Jay, David, and Adam.

He gave me the leadership skills and travel skills that have served me well to this day. I will never forget how fortunate I am to have known this gentle giant. Thanks for the memories, John D. Hicks. Prayers for his family and friends. He will be missed.

JoAnn Stelmack - June 25, 2017 at 08:09 AM



“ It's very hard to find words to describe Mr. Hicks. He had a sense of humor than no other. His loved the staff at Going Places Travel like family. He was so proud of Emily. Their relationship and love transcends space and time. They were so each other and in that sense everything that we loved about Mr Hicks and Going Places Travel continues to live on. He left indelible footprints in this world and will no doubt be there to greet us all with a smile in the next.
Mr. Hicks, if you're reading this and I believe you are, thanks for the love and kindness you showed to me and my family. You came to my mom's funeral just a year ago and that meant so much to me. You were a class act and a deeply faithful and generous man. Thanks for the memories! Gina West, Apple Vacations

Gina West - June 23, 2017 at 04:02 PM



“ I will always remember Mr. Hicks as Emily's spunky, fun and adventurous Dad. He had a great sense of humor regardless of the situation. I loved his outlook on life and he was always fun to be around. He will be missed by so many of us but I know he is looking down upon us and smiling.

Meg Weetenkamp - June 23, 2017 at 03:17 PM



“ John was a great friend! Always fun to be with, Times up in N.Y.,going to show's with you and my Mom. You will be greatly missed! REST IN PEACE, SEE YOU ON THE OTHERSIDE! Your friend, Jimmy

JAMES ANNEN - June 22, 2017 at 07:12 PM



“ Mr. Hicks was a truly wonderful person and had the kindest heart! He always sent the kindest letters and notes and was the best boss ever! I will miss him terribly and I send the family all my thoughts and prayers! What a devastating loss this is! So long to one of the great ones :(

Cheryl - June 22, 2017 at 07:05 PM



“ From Mr Hicks' extended family in Costa Rica and the Hubbe-Calderon family in Baltimore, we extend our condolences. You will be forever in our hearts Abuelo (grandpa) John.

Paula Calderon-Hubbe - June 22, 2017 at 06:31 PM



“ Ginger Snap lit a candle in memory of Mr. John D Hicks



Ginger Snap - June 22, 2017 at 05:37 PM



“ John was a great friend! I loved when he would come over and I would cook dinner for him,my mom and I.We would watch one of his crazy Mel Brooks or Woody Allen movies. I went up to New York a few times with John, had a great time, saw some great shows on Broadway! Billy Joels Moving Out, Lion King,Boy from OZ with Hugh Jackman,I did"nt even know who he was at the time. Ate alot of good food,and did alot of walking. The one thing I regret about going to N.Y. is not going up in the W.T.C. The first I went to N.Y. with John was Sep of 1999 we drove a group of women from his EastPoint Agency to a hotel up there!We had time to kill ,so John asked me if I wanted to ride the subway down to the W.T.C.or go up in the Empire State Building, We right near the E.S.B so I of course picked the E.S.B. John was alot of fun to be with! My Mom and I will greatly miss him! God bless Emily for being there for her Father in his final days REST IN PEACE MY FRIEND, I WILL SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE!

JAMES ANNEN - June 22, 2017 at 12:51 PM



“ Your dad was an amazing man! I am honored to have worked with him even if a short time.

Mr. Hicks you are on the best fam trip...until we meet again
With love and respect, Stephanie Petros

stephanie petros - June 21, 2017 at 09:34 PM



“ I wish I didn't live so far away! I had him show me his wooden casket hanging out in the corner of one of the rooms on the first floor. He was prepared! Hate to be missing this funeral.

Nancy Kiolbasa - June 21, 2017 at 04:57 PM



“ From our family to yours, our deepest, most heartfelt condolences on the loss of a great man.

Debbie Yordy - BDM
The Mark Travel Corporation

Debbie Yordy - June 21, 2017 at 02:45 PM