

Gary Leih passes away

By  Danette Breitenbach

21 Oct 2022

I met Leih when I was working on *AdVantage* magazine many years ago at a conference at some bush lodge. I remember him with a glass of red wine in one hand and a cigarette in the other (we are talking many years ago) telling an entertaining tale.



:Source © Facebook [Facebook](#) Gary Lieh has passed away

Years later I meet Leih again when he was a member of the 2016 AdFocus Awards jury. It was here I got to know the astute adman, and why he was so successful in his chosen career.

The White House

Leih started his creative career at Ogilvy SA, eventually becoming the group managing director of Ogilvy SA in 2000. Five years later he took up the position of chairperson and CEO of Ogilvy UK. He was also president of the European Advertising Association.

He cofounded one of the hottest-rated shops in the country in the 80s, The White House which was eventually acquired by DDB, and Public Image in Australia (and later acquired by TBWA).

In his tribute to Leih, Mike Abel, chief executive partner, M&C Saatchi Abel SA, says, “His young agency The White House DDB was an incredibly special and magical place in the late 80s and early 90s.”

Derek Craig describes in his tribute to Leih on Facebook just what the White House was to those who worked there. “... Quite out of the blue, while I was at JWT, you sidled up at one of those epic cocktail gatherings, at the Heerengracht I think, and offered me a partnership at the most exciting thing that was about to happen to advertising in Cape Town, since RST&M. How could anyone turn that one down. You offered me a seat and partnership at The White House, undoubtedly one of the happiest and most adrenaline-fueled times of my advertising life, in the most beautiful advertising HQ location in the world (Think Oudekraal/Twelve Apostles Spa). Thank you for the opportunity and some special memories.”

In 2011 he co-founded OFyt (which he jokingly once told me stood for Old Farts Young Talent) and was CEO, with Chris Gotz as creative director.

Industry tributes

Tributes have poured in from the industry following the announcement of Lieh's passing on social media.

“ *It is with great sadness that we hear of the passing of Gary Leih. Ogilvy SA would like to extend our deepest condolences to his family and everyone who knew him. Gary made an amazing contribution to both Ogilvy and our industry. May he rest in peace.* pic.twitter.com/EC6w3yoRWL
— Ogilvy South Africa (@OgilvySA) [October 20, 2022](#) ”

David Fox, CEO, Middle East and North Africa region, said, “A man with a cheeky smile and a glint in his eye which always meant trouble (fun) and a boss who always looked after you, pushed you and wanted you to succeed.”

But perhaps Jennifer Lindridge sums Leih's contribution to the industry up best: “Rest gently, Gary Leih. Thank you for making the ad industry in South Africa one of which I wanted to be a part.”

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from VMts.

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