

## **My Friend Ian Whittingham**

Ian was the life and soul of every party. He was always happy and had the ability to face life's challenges with a positive mental attitude.

Ian was one of those people who had a presence about him and when entering a room and could effortlessly command the attention of many. He met with dignitary and builders alike, and drew no distinction between them, treating all as equal, in his friendly and affable manner.

I first met Ian, in April 2000, whilst serving on the Spinal Injuries Association (Merseyside) Council. During his term of office as President, I supported him as Vice President and our friendship grew. His role was pivotal in developing contacts with some of the UK's largest construction firms and securing charitable donations to help our association thrive and prosper. Ian always put others before himself and was particularly concerned with health and safety issues in the construction industry. He regularly attended building sites at his own expense delivering his humorous and thought provoking presentations on construction site safety. These presentations were given to the whole range of construction site workers from labourers to site managers and all listened intently.

I remember accompanying Ian to the Docklands in South East London where we were taken to the penultimate floor of one of the larger tower blocks under development at that time. Ian was treated like royalty and received the red carpet treatment from the developer. I remember part of his presentation was directed at site workers who did not wear high visibility vests. Ian's argument was, "if the high visibility vest had a Nike tick on it, it then it would become a fashion item and all workers would don them with pride", sadly this wasn't the case. To demonstrate the importance of the high visibility vest Ian would ask the audience to gaze over the edge of the building to the ground to establish how insignificant they would look to a crane operator sitting 300ft up when not wearing a high visibility vest. This often had the desired effect and the wearing of high visibility vests increased dramatically. This is only one example of the positive impact Ian's gritty presentations had on workers, promoting health and safety.

It is not possible in such a short narrative to tell you of all the magnificent experiences I shared with Ian. However, I would like to close by saying that Ian was a true inspiration to all who knew him and his memory lives on. If he were here now, I know he would not welcome any acclamations of his character, but I know that what he did during his lifetime will reach far into the future.

Joe O'Connor  
Friend and Colleague