

# MURRAY FORREST AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN FILM CRAFT



In 1964, 22 year-old Murray Forrest took two very bold life steps – he married and emigrated to Australia – *on the same day*. On the afternoon of January 23, Murray wed his sweetheart Georgia in Edinburgh and that evening the newlyweds set sail for Sydney to honeymoon and start their married life.

For Murray, Australia provided a wonderful “run of good luck” that saw the birth of two children, five grandchildren and a remarkable 44-year career in the film industry, during which he would distinguish himself internationally as a brilliant operator and one of the nicest blokes in the business.

Having studied Economics in Scotland with the intention of getting a bank job, Murray arrived in Sydney brandishing a letter of introduction to the CBC Bank. He duly presented himself shortly after arriving and was promised an entry-level post, starting the following week.

In the meantime, Murray heard about a junior position going at Swift and Bleakley, a company that sold motion picture cameras and editing equipment. He got the job, in the Despatch department, and was immediately fascinated by the “creative people who made movies” he was being exposed to.

He approached the bank and asked to be released from the position they were holding for him. “I was very fortunate that the man who had originally offered me a place at the bank could see I was genuinely excited at landing the job at Swift and Bleakley”, says Murray. “He encouraged me to follow my enthusiasm. I’m deeply grateful to him for that.”

Six months into the job, Murray’s co-workers encouraged him to apply for a vacancy at Colorfilm. Murray got the job and met Phil Budden, who was then the man in the post-production business and would become boss, mentor, friend and ‘like a second father’. Despite their long association, Murray only ever called him “Mr. Budden”. Phil Budden told Murray after only three months in the job that he should stay around, hinting at the possibility of a career path into management for the young novice. Murray expressed some doubts, saying he “wasn’t really very technically-minded”. Murray says, “I remember Mr Budden’s response so clearly. He said: ‘Now listen, son. There are 100 people downstairs who have all that technical knowledge. You have other skills to bring to this business.’”

Those simple words convinced Murray he should stay on with company - and he did, for forty-four years, the last thirty as Managing Director. Murray says he learnt much from his mentor and friend, whose simple corporate philosophy revolved around three tenets: be fair, be firm, be nice. When Murray took over and merged Colorfilm with Atlab, there were around 250 employees, which grew to about 400 by the time of Murray’s own retirement from Atlab in 2008.

Murray developed Atlab from a small black and white lab operation servicing newsreels, television and Film Australia documentaries, to a broad-based creative services and distribution business and Australia’s leading post-production facility. He moved the business into colour high-speed printing; equipment manufacture; video post-production and expanded the lab’s services to South-East Asia and then into servicing release print contracts with the major Hollywood studios. Murray’s last job prior to his retirement in 2008 was to oversee the merger of Atlab with Deluxe.

Murray's brilliant career is signposted with various awards, chairmanships and honours, including:

- Founding Chair, **Ausfilm** (1994), industry body to market Australian film services overseas
- Director, **The Screen Producers Association of Australia** 1982–1996, Life Membership in 2008
- President of **The Australian Cinema Pioneers** (1991)
- Director of **The Federation of Producers of Asia** (1978–1984)
- Chairman (1982-1985) & Governor (1980-1985) of US-based **The Society of Motion Picture Television Engineers**. First Australian appointed to SMPTE Board of Governors.
- Awarded Fellowships to both **The British Kinematograph Sound and Television Society** in 1988 (first Australian) and **The Society of Motion Picture Television Engineers** (1986) "in recognition of his service to the film industry on an international scale"
- Recipient of **The Ken G Hall Award** in 2001 (awarded by AFI & National Film & Sound Archive) in recognition of his contribution to the preservation of Australia's film heritage
- **The Australian Cinema Pioneer of The Year** (2004)
- **Motion Picture Exhibitors Association of QLD** Lifetime Achievement Award 2004
- Current Chairman of **The Motion Picture Industry Benevolent Society of NSW** (since 1996)
- Australian International Movie Convention initiated the **Murray Forrest Award for Film Craft** in 2008

Incredibly humbled by all these honours, Murray confesses to a special surge of pride about the Ken G Hall Award – they shared a deep interest in film preservation and Murray cites Hall as one of his mentors – along with Sir Norman Rydge and Phil Budden – and says all three were “great people persons”.

“I had many wonderful years working in the film and television industries and I was so lucky to have the strong relationships I had with so many smart and talented and creative people across a broad spectrum.”

The admiration and affinity Murray had developed early in his career for “the camera people, the technicians, the artisans, the people with the vision it takes to make a film” is to this day enthusiastically reciprocated by the creatives he collaborated with all his working life.

“I always tried to give the same dedication and service to the new and emerging filmmakers and technicians during the 70s, 80s and 90s as I did to the studio heads behind \$100 million productions”, says Murray. “It is great to see many of those people now on the world stage, winning Academy Awards and working at the highest level. The Australian film industry was underestimated for a long time but so many of our people are up there with the best and brightest.”

Since retiring on September 12, 2008, Murray maintains many friendships forged during his working life. He enjoys quality time on the golf course (he plays off 8), watches as many movies as he can, and has much more time to spend with family. Sadly his bride of fifty years passed away in 2015.

His son Gary lives in Brisbane and works for a bank as an analyst. Daughter Lesley, a kindergarten teacher, lives in Sydney. Between them, they have produced five grandchildren, aged 11 to 18, who are the “apples of their ‘Grumpa’s eye”.

# MURRAY FORREST AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN FILM CRAFT— PAST RECIPIENTS



2014— Zareh Nalbandian



2013— The Late Andrew Lesnie unable to attend in person (image from 2002 Academy Award® winner for Best Cinematography on *The Lord of the Rings: the Fellowship of the Ring*)



2012—Don McAlpine



2011—The Late Yoram Gross



2010—Alan Rydge, Non-Executive Chairman, Amalgamated Holdings



2009—Warwick Thornton