

## Martyn Goff

Like everyone else in the booktrade, I had known of Martyn Goff for many years. He seemed to be involved in most of the events of any note in our world – the famous Bedford Square Book bang, BookTrust activities .....and the Booker Prize.

However it was only in 1993 when Colman Getty was appointed to take over publicity for the Booker, that I met and got to know Martyn properly. In those twelve years – and we've probably spoken on the phone at least five thousand times and met five hundred times since then - I have never known him anything other than calm, courteous and totally in control. He has never lost his temper, nor even raised his voice, under circumstances that would have driven most people to sheer violence.

I'm thinking in particular about the foibles of various Booker Prize chairmen over the years: John Bayley in 1994 vacillating wildly between two winners as the minutes ticked by and our guests had actually started dinner in the Guildhall, half an hour's drive away; Douglas Hurd including an extra eight minutes in his on-the-night chairman's speech with the result that the 1998 winner - Ian McEwan – narrowly missed ever being announced to the million TV viewers watching at home. It's the stuff of sleepless nights, but not it seems for Martyn. And the odd thing about this unruffled approach is that he very often, if not always, seems to get his own way!

The other unignorable aspect of Martyn is his fabulous wardrobe. David Beckham has nothing on him when it comes to style. Martyn has a particularly fetching suit, black with flecks of pure white, that he loves to wear even though – or perhaps because - his lunch companion is liable to the embarrassment of trying to brush him down in the mistaken belief that his suit is covered in dust. His collection of psychedelic ties has to be seen to be believed – and is very often a great ice-breaker with a nervous judge or

a new journalist who's taking him out to lunch for the first time.

Martyn loves lunch and probably indulges that passion every working day. They're not just idle opportunities to eat though – he gets through more business between 1 and 3 o'clock than most of us manage between 9 and 5. And his skills at dealing with the media are rightly legendary - journalists ring him from all over the world and are never disappointed with his response. I recently saw a 4-page prize report from a leading Japanese newspaper which was completely indecipherable to me apart from two oft-repeated words - Martyn Goff!

The final thing I love about Martyn is his fund of stories. He's got an extraordinary memory and he puts it to excellent use, recounting the ups and downs of his 30-plus years as administrator to the Booker, now the Man Booker, Prize. Whether it's Anthony Burgess in 1980 refusing to attend the awards dinner unless he had Martyn's absolute assurance that he had won (he hadn't) or Philip Larkin threatening to jump out of the window if Paul Scott's *Staying On* hadn't won (it had), Martyn tells each story in such detail and with such obvious enjoyment that the tales get even funnier in the telling.

He's a remarkable man. While it's difficult to believe that he's about to be 80, I don't think it will change him one jot.

Dotti Irving

Penny – do you want a few words on me?

Dotti Irving is the chief executive of Colman Getty, a leading publishing and arts PR consultancy. Colman Getty now handles PR, administration and event management for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction.