

Conal Walsh, publicist: born Salisbury, Rhodesia 20 August 1957; died London 3 February 1995.

Every spring, the journalists, producers and cooks who make up the British food world gather for coveted awards sponsored by Glenfiddich whisky. Those who carry away the small quaichs and big cheques might expect pay rises and job offers. Those who do not wear tight grins and retire to clubs to nurse their grudges. The man who invariably made a difficult event flow smoothly was Conal Walsh.

He was one of the few respected publicists in the British food world. After his firm, Conal Walsh & Stewart, was formed in 1986, he and his partner, Lindsay Stewart, attracted clients synonymous with quality: free-range chicken farmers, the Soil Association, Groupe Chez Gerard, Wm Grant & Son distillers. Journalists knew that the press releases bearing

his rather beautiful line drawing of an artichoke would be worth reading, and would not (usually) contain irritating invitations to silly publicity stunts. Or if they did, as was the case for something called the "Carnivore's Club", then they would be very, very silly.

It was a testament to his tact that the journalists he informed rarely realised he possessed the greater expertise - in the cultivation, retailing, cooking, serving of food. He had the background: he was the son of farmers in Zimbabwe, and had trained as a journalist for Forbes Magazine in New York before moving to London in 1982.

Here he became the assistant to the television chef Glynn Christian. By the time he opened his consultancy, there was not a foodwriter that he did not know, or a foodwriter (most remarkably in these uncharitable circles) who did not like him. He knew that journalists who are

sacked are often re-hired, and never turned his back on writers temporarily out of fashion.

For the last five years those of us who came to know Conal Walsh professionally learnt of more of his personal life as he devoted increasing amounts of time to nursing friends who were dying of Aids. These friends, like all of us, must have marvelled at his capacity to give and his need to serve.

By Emily Green and Lindsey Bareham
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