

A Tribute to Phillip L. Isenberg: On the 20th Anniversary of the Araki-Isenberg Scholarship

By Jerilyn Paik

The ABAS Law Foundation pays tribute to Phillip Isenberg, who, together with his spouse, Marilyn Araki Isenberg, established the “Araki-Isenberg Scholarship” in 2003. The ABAS Law Foundation has awarded this scholarship on an annual basis for the last 20 years.

The criteria Phil and Marilyn Isenberg set for the scholarship award are simple and important: “an activist law student in financial need.” That succinct and clear phrase – “activist law student” – best exemplifies the qualities that Phil most admired throughout his years of public service and in the social justice that he devoted so much of his life to promoting.

Phil Isenberg died after a sudden illness on October 26, 2023. He and Marilyn had celebrated 60 years of marriage in July. In his years of public service, Phil served on the Sacramento City Council, serving as the city’s Mayor from 1975 to 1982. He then was elected to the California State Assembly where he chaired the Committee on Water, Parks and Wildlife while working to preserve the state’s natural resources.

Phil was also a strong supporter of the arts. As Mayor, he founded the Sacramento Office of Arts and Culture. He and Marilyn were also regular attendees at music concerts and arts exhibits. Phil was also a revered mentor to many younger public servants and was a good friend to those who, like him, sought the best for their community, state and country.

Over the years of their scholarship, Phil and Marilyn have been active donors of the Foundation and have shown additional support for the recipients of their scholarship through personal contact with the deserving law students. In August of this year, Phil and Marilyn attended the ABAS Law Foundation Scholarship dinner and awards program.

The ABAS Law Foundation loses a dear friend and supporter with Phil’s passing. His support will continue through Marilyn, who will maintain the Araki-Isenberg Scholarship.



Photo 2018 - Front row left to right: Phil Isenberg (Phil Telfeyan, Jeri Paik, Ed Telfeyan, Dorothy Landsberg) Marilyn Isenberg