



HIGGS & JOHNSON Celebrates 60 Years as Counsel to the Financial Services Industry

On 2 January 1948, just one year shy of his twentieth year in solo practice, and with the triumph of his successful defence of Count Alfred DeMarigny in the dramatic Sir Harry Oakes trial not too distant a memory, pre-eminent Bahamian attorney the Honourable Godfrey Higgs joined forces with longtime friend and former Registrar-General of The Bahamas Mervyn Johnson to form Higgs & Johnson, the country's first non-family law partnership. In 2008 H&J celebrates 60 years of excellence as the country's leading law firm.

For the first ten years the pair held chambers on the second floor of the House of Myers on Bay Street and Victoria Avenue with a practice dominated by real property and commercial law. In 1958 the office moved to Sandringham House on Shirley Street. Today the firm's more than 35 lawyers occupy four offices throughout The Bahamas and practise across a wide spectrum of legal specialties and disciplines including litigation, private client & wealth management, real estate & development, commercial transactions, securities, financial services law & regulation, insolvency, company formation and management, maritime/shipping and intellectual property.

In recent years, members of the firm have served as consultants on several important pieces of financial services legislation, including Acts relating to Purpose Trusts, Foundations and Private Trust Companies and were involved in advising the government from a private sector perspective on the restructuring of industry legislation in response to initiatives of the Financial Stability Forum, Financial Action Task Force and OECD.

"The firm's expansion over the latter half of the twentieth-century and its continued success now into the twenty-first have truly paralleled the growth of The Bahamas," said Managing Partner John K. F. Delaney. "Godfrey Higgs's reputation as an attorney even before the firm's inception allowed him to attract the highest calibre of clients. Real estate, banking and private wealth management – all key factors in the economic evolution of The Bahamas – have also been the areas where we have applied our energy to promote the development of the financial services sector and the legal profession."

Much of the firm's success over the past 60 years also derives from the high standards and unwavering principles of its longest serving Senior Partner, Sir Geoffrey A. D. Johnstone, KCMG who headed the firm following Mr. Higgs's retirement in 1968 until he himself retired from active partnership in 1998. Mr. Higgs's departure precipitated the admission of several new partners the following year, including Sir Leonard Knowles who in 1973 would become the first Chief Justice in an independent Bahamas.

In 1973 H&J welcomed William McPherson Christie as a partner and incorporated his former practice. In 1999 commercial litigator Phillip C. Dunkley succeeded Sir Geoffrey as Senior Partner with managing partner responsibility and presided over the reopening of the firm's first satellite office at Freeport, Grand Bahama. In 2001 H&J opened its third office at Lyford Cay, at the western end of New Providence. In 2006, after 47 years at Sandringham House, the firm moved its flagship office to Ocean Centre, a state-of-the-art business facility at Montagu Foreshore on East Bay Street. In 2007 John K. F. Delaney succeeded Mr. Dunkley as Managing Partner, and that year marked the opening of the firm's fourth office at Marsh Harbour, Abaco.

H&J has a long history of charitable initiatives in the communities in which it operates. With a thrust on education, H&J is the only private sector partner in the Ministry of Education's Teacher of the Year programme. The firm provides a significant cash prize that rewards educators who exemplify excellence in education and leadership development.

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"This anniversary presents an opportunity to celebrate our longevity, but also provides an occasion to pay homage to the time-honoured principles that will drive us in the future," said Mr. Delaney. "H&J has held to its ideals and reputation despite dramatic changes in our culture and financial system over the last 60 years. We will no doubt continue to hold in high regard our commitment to maintaining close working relationships with our clients and to delivering quality legal services. "

H&J is currently ranked as a Tier 1 law firm by independent global legal directories *Chambers and Partners Global Guide* and *IFLR 1000*. In 2008, for the second consecutive year Higgs & Johnson was ranked first in "inheritance and succession planning – Caribbean" by Euromoney magazine's Private Banking Survey. Other accolades included the highest Bahamian law firm ranked for "tax guidance and services – Caribbean" and the only Bahamian law firm ranked for "corporate advisory for private banking clients – Caribbean".

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