



The American Herbal Pharmacopoeia®

## AHP News & Views

*Standards of Identity, Analysis, and Quality Control*

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## **Michael McGuffin (1951-2025)—The Passing of a True Herbal Hero!**



**AHPA President, 25 years!**  
**AHP Board of Directors, 30 years!**  
**Dear Friend, 40 years!**

### **AHP President, Roy Upton**

It is always bittersweet when you lose a friend and colleague. The bitter is the obvious loss of someone for whom you care deeply and enriches your life just in knowing them. The sweet is in the time spent together in work and life and the memories of having had such a special being in your life. Michael was very much that for me—a special being!

Michael had one of the sharpest minds of anyone I have ever known. What he knew he knew very well. What he did not know he admitted he didn't know and what he needed to know he learned—and he did not flaunt his brilliance. He just did what he had to do. There was no fluff with Michael—never any self-aggrandizing. He was always focused on the task at hand; very much solution-oriented. He did his work relatively quietly, without fanfare and with great effectiveness. All of a sudden, there was a new document or text. Behind the scenes, those works took thousands of person hours, tireless organization and management, years to bring to finalization, and each has become a foundational resource for the entire industry—worldwide! Getting a job done was all the reward he really needed; he did not need to have his ego stroked or have people think how good he was. His attitude was “I’m just doing

my job.”

Based on my observations and in my 29 years as an AHPA member, AHPA has been the most effective of the trade associations in representing issues of importance to herbal healthcare to virtually all stakeholders: AHP, FDA, NSF International, CITES, Fish and Wildlife, National Center for Natural Products Research, United Plant Savers, and United States Pharmacopeia, to name a few. This was mostly all due to Michael directing AHPA personnel, predominantly Chief Scientific Officers Joe Betz, Steven Dentali, Maged Sharaf, and Holly Johnson to actively participate in the organizations that matter most to the herbal products industry. This was in addition to the numerous AHPA committees that he chaired or in which he participated.

Numerous of the most seminal documents published for the herbal industry, including Good Agriculture and Collection Practices, *Herbs of Commerce*, the *Botanical Safety Handbook*, and many more emerged under Michael's leadership. He also has worked collaboratively for decades with all other trade groups, taking the lead on many initiatives, and when he believed it was appropriate, opposing initiatives of other trade groups, always keeping in mind what is in the best interest of the herbal products industry and consumers. His command of the nuances of GMPs was unprecedented. He knew CFR text and verse with all the ambiguities and interpretations that accompany GMPs as well as some of the deficiencies. More than that, he proposed strategies for addressing those deficiencies that remain on AHPA's desks for future leadership to pursue.

All of us who knew Michael well recognized both his kindness and strong backbone and loved and respected him for all of whom he was.

#### **John Cardellina, AHP Board Member**

I am very much saddened to learn of Michael's passing. He was an important, if not critical member of the herbal community at large, and the herbal industry in particular. He joined AHPA shortly after I came to CRN (Council for Responsible Nutrition). We worked together constructively on a number of issues such as pesticide contamination of ginseng, which was an early challenge in my CRN days and we worked together on an industry task force to gather data and formulate recommendations for resolving the problem. I have always respected his zeal and dedication to the botanicals industry and phytomedicine. His knowledge, energy, and connections is a great loss to our community.

#### **Cathirose Petrone, AHP Writer, Editor, and PR Director**

As an AHP team member for almost 30 years, I had the privilege to work with Michael on a professional level, including with him having been an AHP Board Member from its inception. His insight and knowledge of botanicals and the herbal industry will be honored and greatly missed for years to come, as will his wisdom and clarity. Tears have come to my eyes, though, over these past few days as I remember Michael on a personal level. His heartfelt spirit, gentleness, and sense of humor were in full display when we walked together in the rice fields and villages of Bali sharing deeply touching and profound stories of our youths and families. While his professional legacy will continue in so many important ways, the precious personal memories I have of

Michael will live forever in my heart.

**Elan Sudberg, Alkemist Labs**

My relationship with Michael was unique. We entered each other's lives when I was just 17 years old, starting Alkemist Labs and navigating AHPA committee meetings and industry experts with collections of advanced degrees. Because of this, a father/son dynamic evolved, characterized by endless learning, tough love, and sometimes harsh mentorship. I am the industry advocate I am today mainly due to Michael's guidance.

A few days before he passed, I sat with Michael at his home in Venice, California. I told him I loved him and assured him I would continue fighting for this industry. He faintly whispered, "I love you" in reply. Then he fell back asleep. I sat with him for a while and just before I was about to leave, he woke up, looked at me, and spoke his final words to me, "Don't be so angry" ...I hear you Michael, but I am angry and sad that you are gone.

**Max Willis, Chief R&D Officer, Better Being Co.**

Michael McGuffin will forever be a mentor and inspiration to me as a champion of the natural products industry. Beyond all the incredible things he did while leading AHPA for over 25 years, and authoring three editions of the *Herbs of Commerce* and *Botanical Safety Handbook* (canonized herbal bibles), many people may not know that in 1978 he co-founded Zand that my company later acquired. He and Dr. Janet Zand started this immune-centric and herbal-based brand and he worked on the early herbal candy lozenges that Zand has proudly sold for decades! To this day, we still sell the first of all the Zand items Michael formulated called Insure Herbal.

Michael left his mark on our industry fighting for consumer access to dietary supplements, helped found a company, and mentored me personally. He will forever be remembered as a true herbal and natural products champion. I'll never forget some of the last words he told me, "Max, our supplement industry was largely founded by Hippies and Mormons. The Hippies brought the passion and the Mormons brought the brains!"

**Joe Betz, Former Chief Scientific Officer, AHPA**

Michael was one of the smartest people I ever knew. Period. Knowledgeable, dedicated, unbelievably hard working, and never took any grief from anyone. He was an expert on herbs and regulations, and had a vision that encompassed the past and future of the botanicals industry that included the need for the *Botanical Safety Handbook* and *Herbs of Commerce*, and an in-house AHPA scientist. He was a fierce advocate and yet open-minded enough to acknowledge the gaps in his knowledge, which were admittedly very few. Sometimes gruff, but a great person.

**Josef Brinckmann, Traditional Medicinals**

Michael was always genuinely concerned about rural smallholder herb farmers and wild herb harvesters. He knew the regulations backwards and forwards as well as the

quality, sustainability and trade standards of the industry. With his expert knowledge, he advocated for common sense market requirements and rules that would not be burdensome to micro- and small- family enterprises. Michael cared deeply about the people who made their livelihoods bringing the herbs to market.

### **Chris Kilham, Medicine Hunter**

Michael always seemed like a permanent fixture in the herbal scene. He did so much for so long, it's hard to imagine all of us going on without him. Through his leadership of AHPA and his dedication to the herbal industry, Michael played a high-profile and very valuable role in advocating for science and substantiated evidence of herbal efficacy and safety. He did excellent work for the cause. We'll miss Michael. Travel well, friend.

### **Joseph Pizzorno, AHP Board Member**

Thank you Michael for your vision and leadership advancing herbal medicine and natural health. You were relentless in pushing us all to ensure quality and accountability as our movement grew. Rest in peace.

### **Staci Eisner-A True Warriorress**

As this is a tribute to Michael, Staci would likely not want me to say anything about her, but fortunately or unfortunately I have my own mind and heart about such things. Michael could not have had a better partner by his side than Staci Eisner, also an AHP Board Member. The love, strength, and tenacity in her caregiving was a marvel to witness. She was relentless in getting as much information as was available and reaching out to true experts in integrative medicine to achieve the best outcome. If not for her, likely these memorials would have emerged long before now. I believe if she were to express anything it would be in the incredible healing power of all that we do because every time Western treatments brought Michael down 10 notches, the medicines to which we all dedicate our lives brought him back in clearly observable ways. We are all lucky to work in a field that can bring so much healing potential to ourselves, friends, family, and humanity and we are all blessed to be part of an industry where there are so many caring people to help us in need. No one I have ever seen was more caring than Staci. May we all be blessed to have a Staci in our life!

### **Epilogue**

As people contemplate Michael's passing, I believe they will reflect in awe at all he has accomplished on behalf of those dedicated to natural healing and herbal medicine specifically. AHPA has their hero(s) of the year award—Michael has been AHPA's true hero for a quarter of a century. His garden already misses him as do we all. I believe just how much we miss him will be revealed over time. I share the following tribute from my Aunt Ruthie who was like a mother to me and my two sisters and, like Michael, passed away February 17, six years ago. While these words are definitely not Michael's, they are a wonderful expression of love worthy of sharing. Michael, my friend, rest in peace.

### **A Letter from Heaven**

When tomorrow starts without me and I am not here to see.  
If the sun should rise and find your eyes filled with tears for me.

I wish so much that you wouldn't cry the way you did today.

While thinking of the many things we never got to say.

I know how much you love me as much as I love you.

And each time that you think of me I know you'll miss me too.

But when tomorrow starts without me, don't think we're far apart.

For every time you think of me, I'm right there in your heart.



**Other Tributes to Michael**

[https://www.ahpa.org/blog\\_home.asp?Display=322](https://www.ahpa.org/blog_home.asp?Display=322)

<https://www.newhope.com/industry-news/herbal-products-community-remembers-michael-mcguffin-died-february-2025>

<https://www.nutraingredients-usa.com/Article/2025/02/19/herbal-industry-mourns-passing-of-michael-mcguffin/>

<https://www.newhope.com/industry-news/industry-pioneer-former-ahpa-president-michael-mcguffin-dies-after-cancer-diagnosis>

<https://www.newhope.com/industry-insights/ahpa-president-michael-mcguffin-reflects-on-career-in-herbal-products-industry>

<https://crnusa.org/newsroom/crn-statement-passing-michael-mcguffin-president-american-herbal-products-association-ahpa>

<https://www.wholefoodsmagazine.com/articles/17442-in-memoriam-michael-mcguffin-american-herbal-products-association-ahpa>

Sincere regards,

Regester



Roy Upton RH, DipAyu

President, American Herbal Pharmacopoeia®

## CONTACT US

American Herbal Pharmacopoeia®  
PO Box 66809, Scotts Valley, CA. 95067

Email: [ahp@herbal-ahp.org](mailto:ahp@herbal-ahp.org)

Website: [www.herbal-ahp.org](http://www.herbal-ahp.org)

Call Us: 831-461-6318

Fax: 831-438-2196

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