

Biography:

John Louis Agro, whose parents hailed from the South of Italy, was born in 1919. He attended St. Michael's College, and obtained his BA from the University of Toronto. After his time in Toronto, Agro graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School, and was called to the Bar in 1949.

A student returned from the war, John Agro had achieved the rank of Lieutenant while serving in France. Although offered the position of Captain, upon returning to England, Agro declined the promotion for the opportunity to remain in France. This experience gave Agro a firm understanding of hard work and dedication and a sense of standing behind one's own people.

Working in his early days as a new lawyer with Gerard Kennedy, and Donald Cooper, Agro and Kennedy soon parted ways in 1954, as Agro began to take the direction of the firm into his own hands. Hiring on a young and ambitious law student, Nicholas Zaffiro, straight out of law school, Agro created the foundations of a law firm capable of handling a wide range of clients' needs, that would grow to earn itself a strong standing in the city of Hamilton.

Specializing in litigation and criminal law himself, he insisted that his new student take on the commercial end of the budding firm. From this moment on, Agro established himself as the "benevolent dictator" his team of lawyers would. His intensity in his pursuit of justice was recognized in 1959, when Agro became the first lawyer of Italian background to be named Queen's Counsel, and again in 1983 when he was elected bencher in the Law Society of Upper Canada.

Agro's involvement not only with the practice of law, but in a wide range of endeavours established him firmly as a productive and valued member of the Hamilton community. Described as being, 'larger than life', in 1965 Agro became one of the founders of the Canadian Football League Player's Association, in 1976 was appointed the Chairman of the Hamilton Harbour Commission, and in 1984 was proclaimed Hamilton's Italian-Canadian Citizen of the Year.

As former federal cabinet minister and long-time friend John Munro said of Agro, "He had that rich mix of guts and compassion that, to my mind, has always epitomized Hamilton. He was totally mixed in the fabric of Hamilton." This mindset, along with his dedication to his clients, employees and community are what set John Agro out among the many lawyers and law firms in the area. Although no longer with us, his reputation and values live on in the firm which he created.

Source: Newcombe, Ian, DeSantis, Francis, et al. "The History of Agro Zaffiro" pgs, 2-3.
<https://www.hamiltonlaw.on.ca/docs/default-source/history-memory-book/the-history-of-agro-zaffiro.pdf?sfvrsn=2>