

CELEBRATING A PILLAR OF THE “IMMUNITY COMMUNITY”

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My first clear recollection of David Stewart is a train ride I ended up taking with him and one of his colleagues from New York’s Penn Station. I was a very junior lawyer, maybe even still a law student. We were coming from International Law Weekend, a highlight of the annual international law calendar sponsored by the American Branch of the International Law Association—one of the many professional organizations on which David has left an indelible mark. I remember a wide-ranging and thought-provoking conversation peppered with reminiscences of his time in New Haven, Connecticut. I got a taste of David’s trademark deadpan delivery with a hint of mischief revealed by the gleam in his eye and a slight upward curl of one side of his mouth. Perhaps more than a hint.

The best thing a lawyer can be is a problem-solver with integrity. That is David in a nutshell. He had already left the U.S. State Department by the time we got to know each other, but his ability to cut through legal gobbledygook and get to the core of complex issues has proved just as useful in his career as a teacher and “highly qualified publicist,” in the words of the International Court of Justice statute. We have not seen eye to eye on everything. I do not know how many times he has admonished me that “it is the state’s immunity!” when I have talked about “foreign official immunity” as a separate category. He hypothesized early on that spending time as Counselor on International Law would knock some sense into me, and I was fortunate enough to have that opportunity (whether or not it produced the desired effect).

I have treasured our collaborations, and I look forward to future projects. Whatever his official position, David will remain a trusted advisor, sounding board, colleague, and friend to countless members of the international legal community. He is irreplaceable.

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