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JOHN D. APPEL

*Leslie Berman**

Like many of my friends, I've been hard-pressed to get past the obvious to why Professor John Appel's premature passing has been so upsetting, why I've taken it so personally. A quiet man, described by some as aloof, by others as shy, I only caught a glimpse of the rich life he led outside of the classroom, in the arena of family and friends with whom he shared his passions for early music and instruments, philosophy, and great books.

Sitting in Appel's classes (I would never have addressed him so informally, but my friends and I always referred to him, affectionately, as "Appel"), I chose a row near the front in order to hear his slight voice and wry inflections; he had a subtle wit that seemed lost on some of my classmates. Unlike many of his more voluble colleagues, Appel brought very little of his personal enthusiasms and prejudices to Contracts or Trusts and Estates, the two courses which I was lucky enough to have taken with him. But he was lively in his low-key way, and my memories of first year focus on him—Appel assigning Franz Kafka's "The Penal Colony" as our first assignment in Contracts (my classmates who never really got him asked if it would be covered on the exam); Appel reading a contract in a scene from Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice"; Appel bartering away an Elvis (Presley) eraser to illustrate reliance and mistake. Appel was very formal with his students, always addressing us by our last names because he understood that students needed to be respected, and treating us formally was one way to do so. Appel even called his research assistant by her last name until she graduated.

One friend, Amos Neufeld (Class of 1993), has told me that he always intended to give Appel an Elvis eraser as a parting gift, but never got around to it. Another friend, Malla Pollack (Class of 1991), who was his research assistant, took four courses with him, including an independent study. She often said she hoped that the paper she'd written for that course would not prove to be "too embarrassing" in its publishable version, which she wanted to dedicate to Appel to thank him for it in print. As the Class of 1992 Yearbook was being compiled in April, fourteen seniors came in with an ad to thank Appel for what they'd gotten from his classes, and as professors are not known

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to purchase yearbooks, requested that at least a page proof be sent to him, so he'd know how they all felt.

I think that Appel has been my best professor in law school, among the top two or three in my career. In a way, he had just what I'd come to law school to find—intellectual curiosity, not solely for curiosity's sake, but applied to some good purpose. Appel was another kind of rarity in graduate school—he really wanted to teach. Where his colleagues wrote papers and focused on their legal specialties, Appel refused to write and remained a generalist, connecting all aspects of law to the world outside the classroom. He was, quietly, a true renaissance man.

It was only at his memorial service that I learned how young his children were, how broad his interests, how little I knew him. Because it seemed so presumptuous to do so, and because saying thank you seemed so inadequate, I never did, and I suspect that many of my classmates felt the same way. In another context, Professor David Rudenstine told graduating 3Ls that they should never feel too diffident to call him, to let him know how they were doing, to connect, because even brief contacts would be very welcome. Perhaps I'm taking Appel's passing so personally because I never made that connection with him, out of diffidence, because he appeared to be a very private man, and because at times I read his quiet as disinterest. And I worry that too few of his students ever did keep in touch, and that he might not have known just how much he meant to us, how deeply he was respected, how fondly he is remembered, and how much he will be missed.