Symposium on The Civil Rights of Public School Students

For Jack, Mentor and Mensch

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Rosalie Berger Levinson*

But for Jack Hiller, I likely would not have entered the legal academy. I was not getting a law degree to teach law. Rather, I fully intended to practice law. Although as a young woman in the 60s, becoming a teacher of some sort was the major “open” door, I wanted to break the mold and become a lawyer. Jack broadened my horizons.

As a third-year law student, Jack taught me tax and jurisprudence. It was clear that Jack loved his job—especially teaching and writing about the jurisprudential aspects of law. He was also a kind and compassionate man. On the eve of my third-year finals, I was nine months pregnant and Jack was concerned I wouldn’t make it. He arranged for me to sit in his office and take the exam one week before the scheduled date. This was the first of many acts of kindness Jack extended to me.

As graduation approached, Jack encouraged me to think about teaching and to apply for a position on the law faculty. At that time there were no women professors at Valpo Law—actually women filled less than two percent of the faculty positions at law schools nationwide. Jack thought I should break this glass ceiling, and he gave me the confidence I needed to try.

After I joined the faculty, Jack encouraged me to do research and writing and to participate in the international discussion of legal issues. He arranged for me to speak at an international law conference on judicial independence in Malaysia. He arranged for a friend/law professor in Kuala Lumpur to serve as my guide. He arranged for me to continue my travels to China, where he was participating in a Valpo Law summer program he had helped organize. In China, I lectured to American and foreign students and faculty, who critiqued, among other things, our constitutional guarantee of lifetime tenure for federal judges.

Jack felt strongly that faculty, as well as students, should be exposed to a broader, different perspective on our legal system. He made sure this happened through his teaching, his efforts to develop and expand our study abroad programs, and his participation in the publication of the Third World Legal Studies Journal.

I was lucky enough to be one of the beneficiaries of his vast knowledge and expertise. Jack’s passion, moreover, was not only for law, but extended broadly to literature, the arts, and music. Jack was truly a Renaissance man, and he loved to share his passions with his

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friends. He provided many of us with good books to read—my book gifts from Jack comprise two shelves in my office and include not only law books, but also beautiful art books, which he sent to me while I was in the hospital battling leukemia.

In short, Jack was a true Mensch, a sensitive and caring man who served a critical role in my life as mentor and friend, and for that I am deeply grateful.