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Tribute to Richard B. Lillich

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TRIBUTE TO RICHARD B. LILlich

HURST HANNUM*

I last saw Richard Lillich about three weeks before his unexpected and untimely death in August 1996. He had been in Boston for an annual eye examination and, as usual, had managed to squeeze in a Red Sox game at Fenway Park, as well. We spent the day planning revisions to the next edition of the international human rights law coursebook he had first coauthored with Frank Newman in 1979, and on which I had joined him as coauthor for the third (1995) edition. Dinner followed (with a 1975 Chateau Lascombes, as I recall), and I took him on a "tour" of my wine cellar, although it paled beside the one that he had recently installed at his farm in Charlottesville.

Discussions were wide-ranging and focused on the future—and for Richard that implied a multitude of projects that would discourage even the most ardent workaholic. But one of the most remarkable things about Richard was not that he was so productive, but that he managed to produce work of the highest professional quality without losing sight of the personal side of life—his wife, Gerda; Locust Mountain Farm in Charlottesville, just over the hill from Monticello; contacts with friends and colleagues; replenishing supplies from Harrod's; and keeping track of the fortunes of the Red Sox, Celtics, and Cleveland Indians.

Professor Lillich's impressive biography and publications are set out elsewhere in this volume, and his accomplishments in a number of fields were impressive. It was the field of international human rights, however, to which he made his most lasting contribution and which, I believe, was first in his heart. Although The Procedural Aspects of International Law ("PAIL") Institute, which Richard Lillich founded in 1965, did a great deal of work in the area of international claims and other private international law issues, one of its earlier publications was a book by John Carey, *U.N. Protection of Civil and Political Rights* (1970). In 1978, Richard was the driving force behind the establishment of the International Human Rights Law Group, initially a component of the PAIL Institute and later to become an independent human rights nongovernmental organization active in projects from Cambodia to Zaire, Washington to Geneva. Richard

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was the Law Group's first Chairman of the Board and remained on its Advisory Council until his death. As mentioned above, 1979 saw publication of *International Human Rights: Problems of Law, Policy, and Practice*, coauthored with Frank Newman, which soon became the leading human rights law text. A couple of years later, he inspired and found funding for the Law Group-supported *Guide to International Human Rights Practice*, which also became the standard work in its field.

Richard was not an overtly "activist" human rights lawyer; he rarely went on fact-finding missions and thought attending sessions of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva was largely a waste of time. However, he frequently contributed to amicus briefs which addressed international human rights issues in U.S. courts, pursued evidence of U.N. sanctions-busting by Shell and Mobil in Southern Rhodesia as though he were a journalist working on a scoop, and constantly emphasized the practical impact of good human rights lawyering in his writings and speeches.

Indeed, almost no talk by Richard Lillich about human rights failed to underscore the importance of good and careful lawyering. Implicitly, the message was that international human rights law was no less deserving of the best legal minds and the most careful legal analysis than tax codes and trade treaties. It was wonderful if you cared about the plights of others and were willing to contribute time and energy to human rights causes—but good intentions never compensated for sloppy fact-finding or slipshod logic, in Richard's view. As a result of the exacting standards he demanded of himself and others, Richard frequently disagreed with the prevailing "progressive" winds in the human rights movement, but no one ever doubted the depth of his convictions.

Richard's personal and professional life converged in his extraordinary generosity towards younger scholars whose work he respected. Although his manner often appeared to be rather gruff or formal (he did not belong to the "my teacher is my friend" school of pedagogy), he went out of his way to invite younger colleagues with good ideas to conferences, encourage their contributions to projects in which he was involved, and generally support their work. While I always thought of him more as colleague (and, later, friend) than mentor, his example and encouragement during the ten years during which I served as Executive Director of the PAIL Institute contributed mightily to my own professional development, as it did to that of many others.

The death of any valued colleague at the young age of sixty-three leaves gaps which are difficult to fill. The breadth of Richard

Lillich's work, the truly global reach of his professional contacts, and his unmatched energy left a void of distressingly deep proportions. The institutional and intellectual legacies Richard left will continue to inspire, but it is difficult to imagine anyone else who will be able to keep as many balls in the air at one time—without dropping one. Even after many months, I still expect phone messages or quickly written letters, outlining yet another project or reminding me of a deadline that looms a year or two hence.

Richard Lillich was a quietly religious man, and he chose a passage from The Book of Common Prayer for an epigraph to the third edition of *International Human Rights*: "For the poor and the oppressed, for the unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives, and for all who remember and care for them." Richard remembered and cared and worked tirelessly on behalf of justice and compassion, and it is fitting that he, too, will be remembered not only in our prayers, but in our thoughts and deeds.

