

2012

David J. Bederman: A Tribute

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Recommended Citation

Judith B. Prowda, *David J. Bederman: A Tribute*, 61 Emory L. J. 1061 (2012).
Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.emory.edu/elj/vol61/iss0/16>

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DAVID J. BEDERMAN: A TRIBUTE

*Judith B. Prowda**

I met David at New York University School of Law in the fall of 1995, at the beginning of the semester when David was a visiting professor and I was to begin a year as a research fellow. A student of David's introduced us at a reception, and I thought David was a classmate. He looked so young that I couldn't believe that he was teaching a lecture course in international law. I had taken that course just the year before—taught by two preeminent scholars—and found it to be one of the most challenging courses in law school.

The following week, out of curiosity, I attended David's class. As David's Southern-accented pearls of wisdom filled the classroom, I immediately regretted that fate had not made me one of David's students.

But if I had had the good fortune of being David's student, perhaps I would have lost out in other ways, for he became my dear colleague and friend—and my mentor as well, because teaching was one of David's many natural gifts.

That fall I met David's wife, Lorre, and their daughter Annelise, a rambunctious five-year-old. Eventually, I would also meet David's loving parents, Jolayne and Sanford, as well as his extended family, colleagues, students, friends, and dogs. David's parents shared enchanting stories about David as a precocious boy, bespectacled and bookish, so easily transportable as long as he had something to read. Ever the intellectual, David's interests ranged from antiquity and Roman law, cultural heritage law, constitutional law, international law, and admiralty law, to world history, literature, and art, to name a few. He also had a penchant for historical and nautical fiction and detective thrillers, as well as popular culture. And who could forget how David burst onto national television in an interview about the fascinating Oprah v. Veggie Libel case in 1998? That was when the world got their first sharp view of David's expertise, poise, and talent for analyzing complex and groundbreaking legal issues.

Over the years David and I collaborated on cases, articles, and bar-association panels where our practice and research interests intersected. If

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anyone has any doubts that intellectual property and shipwrecks could possibly appear in the same sentence, I urge you to read our 1998 article, *In “Titanic” Case, IP and Admiralty Laws Collide*, published in the *National Law Journal*, in which we discuss photographic rights to the wreck.¹

David often encouraged me to become a law professor and would be proud to see me complete my fifth year of teaching, with him as my inspiration and role model. I am writing my first book on art law, which I will dedicate to David, who so generously provided me with insights, even during his final weeks on Earth. As I write this Tribute, which exceeds the word count allotted, my first impulse is to seek advice from David on where to trim. He was endlessly patient and giving.

I have been fortunate to share many wonderful moments with the Bedermans—joyful gatherings, such as Thanksgiving, and lazy, sun-drenched days at their beach home on Amelia Island. I’ve watched Annelise grow from a pixie five-year-old to a mature, lovely, and brilliant (thanks to her great genes) college student, young researcher, and future physician. Annelise’s successes and personal strength are a testament to her devoted, loving parents and her magnificent grandparents.

I have observed with admiration David’s Supreme Court and circuit court arguments and listened to many, many lectures. I have learned and continue to learn from reading his books, articles, and briefs. And I have attended celebrations honoring David, such as the tribute for David at Emory in 2007, when he received the law school teaching award and was named the K.H. Gyr Professor in Private International Law; a surprise tribute last spring in Atlanta organized by his colleagues at Odyssey; and the heart-wrenching but uplifting celebration of David’s remarkable life at Emory last December. As I gazed around the light-filled Cannon Chapel that clear, crisp morning listening to the reflections expressed by Lorre, Annelise, and several of David’s closest colleagues, enveloped by the exquisite music, I did not see an empty seat or a dry eye in the place. But I did feel a sense of community with others who were also touched profoundly by David, a gentle man who made us better lawyers and people by following his example in living a good and honorable life. One of his oldest childhood neighbors told me after the ceremony that, as a youngster, David was fascinated by the clouds. He would be smiling down, from up there, over his legacy.

¹ David J. Bederman & Judith Beth Prowda, *In “Titanic” Case, IP and Admiralty Laws Collide*, NAT’L L.J., Oct. 19, 1998, at C18.

It is to David that this Issue of the *Emory Law Journal* is dedicated. There is no more fitting a tribute, for David's scholarship has an enduring place in the international, constitutional, and admiralty legal cannon. David, the devoted and loving husband, father, and son. David, the gifted professor, brilliant scholar, tireless advocate, and wise counselor. David, the loyal colleague and friend. David, who quietly showed all of us the meaning of courage. Precious David, lover of life, we will treasure your memory to the depths of the sea.