

His scholarly research mainly focused on diplomats and their activities, with publications in *World Affairs*, *Foreign Service Journal*, *Eastern European Quarterly*, *Asian Affairs*, *Polish Review*, *Diplomacy*, and *Statecraft*, as well as a number of contributions to a variety of edited volumes. Jim was also the co-editor, with Prof. Alan Wertheimer, of *Perspectives on the Holocaust: Essays in Honor of Raul Hilberg*. Perhaps his most important scholarly contribution was his co-authored study of diplomats of the Baltic “captive nations” with Prof. James T. McHugh: *Diplomats Without a Country: Baltic Diplomacy, International Law, and the Cold War*.

In his later years, Jim was a key participant in the Public Members Association of the Foreign Service, which advises the secretary of state on ambassadorial and other diplomatic appointments and promotions. He would rise to become vice president of the association and serve as a member of its board of directors. He also served on the council of consultants to the American Hungarian Foundation in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Jim was a man of great wit, warmth, and humor, the latter often at his own expense. Jim was fond, for example, of telling new colleagues this story. Soon after his arrival at UVM, his parents visited. He told them he would be able to show them around only on Tuesday and Thursday, since he taught the other three days of the week. His mother gently patted his arm, and told him: “Don’t worry Jimmy. No one back in Manville has to know that you only have a part-time job.” However his work at UVM might be measured, it was a job and profession he loved and cherished.

In addition to Ruth, his beloved wife of 54 years, Jim is survived by their daughter Laura Echevarria of Atlanta, son Ben of Burlington, their spouses, and three grandchildren of whom he was extremely proud.

John P. Burke
Garrison Nelson
Alan Wertheimer
University of Vermont

David Rebovich

On the morning of the day before he passed away David Rebovich felt under the weather. However, no flu (as he believed it to be) could prevent him from meeting his students to plan the next activity sponsored by the Institute of New Jersey Politics. Nor could it keep him from staying after the meeting to speak with those students who had need for his

help or advice. One of the latter was a senior who decided to pursue the sought-after position of intern at the governor’s office. David agreed to recommend him for the position and the two parted. This however was not the last that the student heard of the position. Following David’s funeral, the governor identified him and instructed him to submit the application.

I chose to begin these brief comments with the story of the last intern David had placed because it reveals, in a short concentrated way, some of the most essential attributes of David the person, the teacher, and the public intellectual. That just days before his death he had published an article criticizing the governor only serves to highlight the first of these characteristics: his tremendous influence. In the 23 years since his first public media appearance as a commentator on NJN’s *New Jersey Politics* he had become “the undisputed dean of political observers in New Jersey” (state GOP chair Tom Wilson). This was not a question of quantity alone, though by the end of the century and until his premature death he averaged the astonishing number of some 600 media engagements in an academic year. Rather, it was the quality of his analysis that, to quote Democratic governor Jon Corzine, won universal acknowledgement as “nonpartisan, fair, and vital to the public discourse.” His weekly columns appeared in the *Trentonian*, the *Times of Trenton*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *New Jersey Lawyer*, and, most recently, in *Politics NJ*. In 2001, the New Jersey chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists honored him as the best weekly columnist. No less and perhaps more profound was his impact as a commentator. As the most sought after source of insight by the media professionals and public at large, he explained in countless articles, radio, and television appearances the hidden reaches of the political world. It is little wonder, then, that *Politics NJ* named him among the (17 of 100) non-elected New Jerseyans “with clout, with impact on politics and government,” or that he was identified among the most frequently quoted personalities in the state.

The unexpected ending of the story points to an additional attribute of David the person and the teacher. The rapidity with which his recommendation reached its destination (less than half a day in which he already felt unwell) could have been a result of some fortunate coincidence. However, for all who knew him, it was simply a reflection of the coalescence of the personal and the professional, his private life and his work. Boundaries between them become so

blurred that his students and the people who populated the political world that he studied became his social group. He shared their lives, criticized them as he did himself, and rendered the problems they contended with his own. A member of the New Jersey Senate I spoke with in preparing these comments seized this up when he stated that it was this quality that accounted for his success as a public intellectual: “For him what others call work was a way of living, a habit of mind. He did not stand in relation to the political world as an outsider looking in and reporting what he saw.”

This goes a long way to explaining David’s unusual popularity as a teacher as well as the method of teaching for which he became famous at the university. In a small university such as Rider, we all are familiar with the “guru phenomenon.” Students who find common language (and often enough garner good grades) keep on attending “their” professor’s classes, so that each of us has a cadre of students who become familiar links among classes and come to know us better than most students do. What distinguished “Dr. Reb” (as his students called him) was that such a fellowship became a “club” in and of itself: a group of students and a teacher who met frequently and informally, so that class became the structured center of a vast informal network. Nights in residential colleges end late, and most students avoid 8:00 a.m. classes. Because interactions would usually continue after class and because David so frequently attended the late morning or early afternoon sessions and press conferences at the neighboring New Jersey Legislature, all his classes were conducted in the early mornings. All of them were filled to capacity, and were usually closed by the end of the first day of course registration. An early morning visit to Fine Arts Hall would force upon the caller their extraordinary nature: most classes were quiet, with the professor scribbling on the blackboard or engaged in monologues in half-empty rooms. David’s packed classes were conducted as an ongoing dialogue among the students and between them and the professor, with frequent busts of laughter intercepting serious conversations.

Students do not learn only because committed professors tell them that their subject is of great consequence. David’s total immersion in his subject and his students, coupled with his gifts as a teacher, made him successful in what, for lack of other words, could be called the marketing of his subject. What distinguished him was the ability to illustrate its relevance for his students’ lives, an

essential part of what explained their reality as well as a key to where it will tend. The method for which he became famous among students was of teaching by application. Much of the class was spent not on the study of abstract principles but on stories, frequently of personal nature and often bordering on gossip that illustrated the principles in the language of daily life. A brilliant sense of humor and a natural story-telling talent thus became a tool employed to challenge students to employ the principles as building blocks for the construction of the meaning of daily life. The students thereby became involved as David's partners in understanding the subject matter

and its relevance to concrete life. Unless principles were of a particularly difficult nature, they themselves were rarely explored in class. The students were invited to locate them in the bibliography, and the very anticipation of the fun ensured the reading and effort put into the comprehension of the material. In the words of one student, "The class was a fun, enjoyable experience, and we looked forward to it the entire week. Reading was a kind of a ticket. Unless you paid, you could not enjoy. It was only later that we found out that the way we thought was actually changed."

David could not have won a greater accolade. What he practiced and believed

was that, in our profession at least, professors should be judged not by what their students remember from their classes but by what their students retain after they have forgotten most of the content we teach. In short, the degree to which we instill inquisitiveness, habits of thinking, and the sense of empowerment that derives from the realization that we live in a world that (to borrow the poetic phrase) "we half perceive and half create."

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