

IN MEMORIAM

A REMEMBRANCE OF HAROLD K. JACOBSON

by Charlotte Ku*

Harold Jacobson served as a member of the Board of Editors of the *American Journal of International Law* for eighteen years—the last six as an Honorary Editor. He was a member of the Society's Executive Council, led an early research and study project on environmental protection under the Society's auspices, and served on many committees in his more than three decades as an ASIL member. His latest contributions included the co-editing with Ruth Wedgwood of an *AJIL* symposium on State Reconstruction after Civil Conflict that appeared in the January 2001 issue. And his last book project was on democratic accountability and the use of force that he and I were co-editing at the time of his death. Within ASIL circles, Harold Jacobson was perhaps best known as a respected, accomplished, and dedicated scholar who worked hard to join social science inquiry with international law.

But even knowing him only as a scholar gave insight into Harold Jacobson as a person. His manner was quiet and soft-spoken, but his reserve masked a deep passion and determination. A passion to strengthen the ability of individuals to recognize the good and talent in themselves in order to solve and to manage the challenges of life. He was an optimist, but was not naïve about the complexity of life or the issues he studied. He believed that through disciplined investigation with creativity, intelligence, and modesty, we could discover the formulas that would make for a better life and a better world. Although his own achievements and accolades pleased him, they pleased him more when they were recognition of a group effort.

But this was not false modesty. Rather it was a practical acceptance that individual abilities when joined with others could simply work more effectively on complex problems. He was impatient to find pieces of life's puzzle, but he knew that haste did not always produce the right answer and so chose to employ more hands to labor together in probing a question. The method suited him because Harold Jacobson enjoyed people and conversations with him would invariably start with, "Call me Jake."

In the months since Jake's death, numerous tributes have appeared. So many have remembered him as the nicest of persons. Jake's generosity of spirit was perhaps what made him that nicest of persons. But this generosity would not have had such a profound effect if he had not been a man with a strong sense of himself—his Scandinavian roots, his childhood spent during World War II, his deep attachment to Michigan—both the state and the university, his devotion to his family, and his enthusiasm for his students and his work. His generosity translated into respect for others and a deep sense of responsibility.

He worked hard not to let anyone down. One of his sons recounted to me that "Dad said he was being naughty by being ill when he should be working." The work was on the book Jake and I were editing when he died. But characteristically, he let neither me nor our research team down. The work was nearly done and was completed only a few months after his death.

By living them, Harold Jacobson fostered important values in his family, friends, colleagues, and students—the values of honesty, integrity, humility, intelligence, and joy. These are the values that inspired his scholarship and made him that nicest and wisest of persons that so many remember.

* Executive Vice President and Executive Director, American Society of International Law.