

*Tim Stephens**

I first met Professor Ivan Shearer in 1998, the final year of my LLB degree at the University of Sydney Law School, when I was a student in Ivan's classes in Advanced Public International Law. In that year, Ivan also assisted the Philip C Jessup International Law Moot team of which I was a member. Ivan had a long association with the Jessup Moot, having introduced the competition to Australia from the United States in 1977. In the decades to follow he coached teams from several law schools and travelled with them to Canberra for the national rounds. Ivan was a thorough and caring teacher, and an exceptionally patient coach and judge in the Jessup competition. Ivan was never directly critical; instead he offered warm and encouraging advice, such as the value of 'conversational' rather than 'confrontational' advocacy.

Several years later, I had the great fortune to have Ivan appointed as one of my PhD supervisors. Ivan was always meticulous in his review and commentary on draft work. Ivan's guidance as a supervisor was as forgiving as his teaching and his judging; he was charitable and constructive in his commentary, gently correcting misunderstandings of principle, and rectifying any faulty use of French, German and Latin terms (the latter which I had included on Ivan's sound advice that if an international legal proposition is expressed in Latin it is generally true). Ivan kindly continued to have a hand in supervising my thesis after his retirement as Challis Professor of International Law.

As teacher, supervisor, and colleague I particularly enjoyed Ivan's fondness for digression. He was always keen to explain tangential, incidental and coincidental points of history or law, not only out of pure interest and curiosity, but also because they often cast light on issues of major importance. Ivan had a masterful ability to teach international law through personal anecdote, and he was able to captivate a room in recounting these with characteristic good humour, and with his smile and infectious chortle. Ivan was a truly captivating raconteur and many of his tales remain etched in the minds of his students and they continue to be told and retold.

Ivan had a great love of music, none more so than for Richard Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. However, I often thought of Ivan as having some similarity to the protagonist in another great Germanic musical cycle — Gustav Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer* — in that Ivan was a journeyman, happy to serve dutifully and humbly, wherever his scholastic or professional calling took him (whether it be the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho, the Pacific microstate Kiribati, the Hanseatic City of Hamburg, or the United Nations' headquarters in New York).

Ivan's contributions were legion, but he was unfailingly humble. It was this contrast — between Ivan's stellar career and his modesty — that earned him the description

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‘International Man of Mystery’ in a profile in the 1998 volume of *Blackacre*, the yearbook for University of Sydney law students.¹ In that profile, Ivan offered sage advice to students entering the legal profession: make sure that the urgent never triumphs over the important, he said; achieve self-discipline but never lose humanity; and above all make sure that practice does not wear away one’s vibrancy, attractiveness and intellectual curiosity.

Ivan certainly kept true to his own counsel. Ivan declined to follow his mother’s suggestion that he take up tax law on graduation from the University of Adelaide in 1960. He was interested in broader topics. But he was nonetheless a very fine ‘lawyer’s lawyer’ in every respect, bringing to extradition, the law of the sea, human rights, and myriad other topics of international law his formidable and persuasive analytic and forensic skills, and his commitment to values of humanity and dignity.

Ivan was a most warm, generous and supportive teacher, colleague and friend, and one of the great characters of Australia’s international law community. He was held in tremendous affection by all of those he taught, and he will be very dearly missed.

¹ Tim Stephens, ‘An Interview with Ivan Shearer’ (1999) *Blackacre* 1998 35-36.