

A TRIBUTE FROM A POLITICAL SCIENTIST

*Harold K. Jacobson**

Political scientists who specialize in international relations knew Bill Bishop as the Editor-in-Chief of the *American Journal of International Law*, the author of the classic text in international law, and the teacher of our former students. A fortunate few of us, at Princeton before he joined the faculty of the Michigan Law School and at Michigan after his formal retirement, knew him as a superb teacher of international law to undergraduate students in political science courses. However we knew him, we had and have immense respect, admiration, and affection for him.

Whether or not political scientists had personally met him, and despite his austere presence, we thought of him and talked about him as Bill, not William Bishop. From his writing and his role in the field, we intuitively sensed his unpretentious, direct, and friendly character.

For us — as for everyone — Bill Bishop was a scholar's scholar. His command of detail was awesome. His mind was a virtual data bank. On any issue, he would be quick to produce the relevant points of law, precedents, cases, and background information. Whether one encountered this quality in reading material that he had written, listening to him in meetings, or in conversing with him, one always knew that Bill had presented all the information that could possibly matter. The detail had not been mastered simply for the sake of detail; rather, it was always fitted into broader patterns that explained relationships and trends. Talking with him or reading Bill Bishop was always a humbling and inspiring experience for a political scientist committed to the search for generalizations. What Bill said or wrote always reflected both the enormous complexity and the patterned character of the world. His example cautioned us that we had to master the detail (which we frequently would rather not do) at the same time that it inspired us to pursue our belief that generalizations are possible.

As we struggled with our own debates about whether or not political science should be value free, we recognized Bill Bishop as a man of moral principle, whose principles clearly affected his scholarship, yet in a way we could only admire. His principles gave focus and purpose to his scholarship. Though he made value judgments, his

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conclusions were not reached hastily, but only after weighing all of the factors and always respecting the dignity and humanity of all sides. He was always judicious and fair.

Bill Bishop's uncompromisingly high standards, which he applied equally to himself as well as to others, were legendary. His editorship of the *American Journal of International Law* established criteria of excellence that have had lasting effects that have extended beyond the *American Journal* to other journals that deal with international law and international affairs more broadly. His call for high standards was compelling because it was put in such logical terms and administered with such a light and at times self-deprecatory touch. Bill Bishop always appreciated the fun, use, and value of humor. Though his purposes were serious, he did not pursue them in a heavy way.

Bill Bishop was a teacher to all of us, whether or not we had the privilege of studying with him or knowing him personally. He gave us direction about what the field should be and how we should conduct our studies. His kindness and respect for human dignity were evident in all that he did; they were the base of his scholarship and the way in which he went about it. The inspiration he gave us will last and be transmitted through generations of political scientists.