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A Tribute to Frederic L. Kirgis

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A Tribute to Frederic L. Kirgis

Mark Drumbl*

Rick Kirgis has been by my side since I joined the Washington and Lee University School of Law. When I write "by my side," I mean so in a literal sense: after all, Rick and I are neighbors in Lewis Hall. That said, I also mean "by my side" in a much more meaningful sense, namely as a mentor. And Rick certainly has a gift for mentorship. We share similar interests in international law and Rick, as countless classes of our graduates know, gives so much of his interests to others. Rick has diligently read and commented on basically everything I have written. In this capacity, he has been many things: patient, giving, accepting, rigorous, honest, sharp, wise, and blunt. I am much in his debt, as we all are.

Rick patiently listens to concerns, calms the anxious, and gives perspective to the elated. He is a leader through his actions and a role model through his conduct. In a time period where international law has been under siege, Rick's composure is a source of strength; in a scholarly world of faddish change, Rick's resolve inspires. Finnish international law scholar Martti Koskenniemi has described international law as the "gentle civilizer of nations."¹ This is a wonderfully apt description. And within our field, Rick remains the gentle mentor and teacher, so befitting of the wider civilizing mission of international law at large.

In effect, Rick founded international law at Washington and Lee and in doing so, he has left an indelible mark on this institution. It is fitting that the prize for the best student of international law in each graduating class at

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1. See generally MARTTI KOSKENNIEMI, *THE GENTLE CIVILIZER OF NATIONS: THE RISE AND FALL OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, 1870-1960* (2001).

Washington and Lee receives the Frederic L. Kirgis, Jr. Award. Future generations of teacher-scholars in Lexington face the challenge of following in his footsteps; it will be hard work to live up to his expectations, but this work is more than worthwhile for it will ensure that we stay true to the deepest values of our community. He has undertaken the challenge of drafting the history of the American Society of International Law—a proud history that will be done justice by Rick's objectivity, integrity, and care for detail. Rick's energy and enthusiasm know no bounds.

It has been a privilege for me to work with Rick and an honor to assemble these tributes in his name. Truth be told, this latter task has been an easy one. The response to write about Rick has been effusive. He has touched so many lives in so many constituencies. These range from our community at Washington and Lee to the world of international law, particularly the membership of the American Society of International Law and the American Journal of International Law. The tributes that follow represent members of these many constituencies, including former students. These tributes are beautiful in the depth of the feeling they invoke, the respect they intone, the diversity of perspectives they share, and the joy they illuminate.

José E. Alvarez*

This summer, I completed a decade-long effort to put in writing what I have endeavored to accomplish in my course on international organizations (now fashionably re-titled "global governance"). As I indicate in the acknowledgments to that book,² neither my book nor my course would exist without Frederic Kirgis, to whom I owe a great intellectual debt.

In 1984, when I was a callow lawyer in the office of the Legal Adviser of the U.S. Department of State, one of my colleagues recommended to Georgetown that I be hired as an adjunct professor to teach an evening course on international organizations. At the time, I now confess, I knew next to nothing about the subject but I was eager to try my hand at teaching. I readily agreed when offered the opportunity, especially when I was told that there was a casebook available: Kirgis's *International Organizations in Their Legal*

* Hamilton Fish Professor of Law & Diplomacy, Columbia Law School; President, American Society of International Law.

2. JOSÉ E. ALVAREZ, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AS LAW-MAKERS (2005).