

*Rebecca LaForgia**

The last time that I was with Ivan was when he delivered a lecture for the South Australian chapter of the International Law Association about his life in international law. The talk was held in April 2019 and was entitled ‘International Law Now and Then’.¹ It was a wonderful talk filled with reflections, humour and insights drawn from a lifetime of experience and dedication to international law. In attendance were, among others, international law teachers, Ivan’s past students, and law students (so very keen to hear from Ivan). That was a characteristic I observed over the years — how law students gravitated to Ivan, finding a natural wisdom in his words but also it seemed to me they were inspired by his wisdom, civility and dignity, seeing something they might aspire to.

I first met Ivan at the University of South Australia on his return to Adelaide. Ivan would freely give of his time and deliver guest lectures on international law. He would offer mentoring at staff presentations and was a true pleasure to work with, always generous, encouraging and supportive.

When I moved to the Adelaide Law School, where Ivan was Adjunct Professor from 2013–19, we would meet for lunch and share dinner from time to time. In our conversations international law merged with life generally. I can recall vividly a lunch at which we discussed many interesting matters of international law and then visited the Art Gallery of South Australia to stand together in front of a painting by South Australian artist Robert Hannaford of his neighbour, entitled ‘Portrait of Miss Bachelor’. Ivan and I discussed the artwork — it had always struck me as a magnificent painting because Miss Bachelor, as she sits there, seems to be hesitating or permitting the portrait to be painted by her neighbour, rather than seeking out the image of herself. The effect of this hesitation is to create an expression of Ms Bachelor’s real individuality. The discussion between Ivan and me was around international law and how we could ever account for such profound individuality in each other within the discipline. We spoke about Ivan’s views on this and then we stood together in silence for quite a while. Ivan said at the time that Miss Bachelor seemed regal like the Queen. It was a comment that stayed with me because it was both accurate and yet not immediately obvious, as Miss Bachelor was definitely an older Australian woman and in modest attire. Ivan was speaking about her dignity, her sense of self, and her sovereignty. At Ivan’s funeral, he had prepared the prayers of the faithful and one of them began ‘[f]or Queen Elizabeth II, Sovereign of Australia ...’ I thought of Ivan’s comments before Miss Bachelor and about seeing dignity.

Ivan and I were both on the committee for the South Australian chapter of the International Law Association. It was in our last meeting that Ivan generously

* Senior Lecturer, Adelaide Law School, University of Adelaide.

¹ Ivan Shearer, ‘International Law Now and Then’ (Speech, International Law Association South Australian Chapter, 12 April 2019).

agreed to give his lecture on 'International Law Now and Then'. I am so grateful he did, as all those in the room have a memory of Ivan's overview of his life and his truly exemplary work in international law. But also at this presentation, through the gentle tone, humour and reflective anecdotes, there was a picture of Ivan himself, in dignity and completeness. I will miss Ivan's conversations, company, wisdom and knowledge.