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# John H. Jackson, A Personal Tribute

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My father, John Howard Jackson, was a life-long advocate for strengthening a rules-based trading system. While he recognized the importance of developing a predictable, transparent economic system, the larger goal in his view was to contribute to creating conditions for world peace. He argued for a system that would favour co-operation in situations where domestic policy-makers might otherwise make decisions that would have negative spill-over effects on their trading partners. At the same time, he recognized the tension between the need to have rules conducive to stability and predictability and the need to allow official discretion to address targeted problems. The challenge of crafting institutions that could effectively manage this tension captured his attention throughout his career.

Like many scholars, my father understood the importance of paying attention to details. He was a meticulous researcher and used whatever technology was on hand to keep track of information. In the early part of his career, when he was researching his first book, he was invited to the library of the GATT in Geneva. At a time when there were no photocopiers or digital technologies, he photographed countless pages of documents with his 35 millimeter camera and developed the film himself at home. He always had note cards stashed in his shirt pocket to record events and capture ideas whenever and wherever they occurred to him. He read three papers every morning and would leave notes on the top of the first page noting interesting articles. Stacks of boxes with clippings towered in his home office. Unsurprisingly, he developed strong relationships with librarians throughout his career, who perhaps recognized in him a fellow archivist.

While excelling in his own field of expertise, my father was not inhibited to try new things. He was a systems-thinker and appreciated inter-disciplinary work. Throughout his career he sought connections with experts in other fields, in particular with economists, and these connections strengthened his own analyses. Conversations would spark new ideas or lines of thinking and he relished exploring these with others seated around his dinner table.

In the past decade, he often focused on how the WTO could adapt to globalization and the resulting changing economic and political conditions in the world. He considered that the dispute settlement functions of the WTO could, to some extent, contribute to filling gaps and addressing ambiguities in treaty provisions and he



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believed that the WTO has sufficient institutional flexibility to respond to new challenges. While he could identify short-comings, he was optimistic about the ability of the WTO to evolve, given the importance of stable, predictable economic trading relationships needed to sustain peace in an increasingly complex world.

My father set an extraordinarily high standard as an international trade law scholar. His extensive list of publications gives a quantifiable indication of his academic success. But this one-dimensional measure, while impressive, underestimates his influence on the world trading system. In my view, his lasting legacy originates from his relationships with people and the way he changed individual lives through his teaching, mentorship, and collaboration.

My father had a vast network of friends, colleagues, and former students. My parents travelled extensively, including annual trips to Europe where he, often accompanied by my mother, participated in conferences and workshops. During their visits to Geneva, he would roam the halls of the WTO Secretariat, dropping in on Secretariat experts with whom he would discuss current issues and ideas. He felt that he learned from each conversation and valued having the opportunity to deepen his understanding of current aspects of the Secretariat's work.

After my father died, many colleagues shared their recollections of my father with me, noting his curiosity and his unpretentious manner. While he will be missed by many, we celebrate him and recognize the important ways that his contributions and connections will continue to shape the world in the future.

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