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TO MY STUDENTS: "TRY TO BE LIKE BILL LANDERS"

*Laurie L. Levenson**

I am now in the profession of teaching future lawyers. I joined this profession after eight years in the Los Angeles U.S. Attorney's Office. During several of those years, I had the privilege of working with an extraordinary person, William J. Landers. Bill was my teacher, my colleague, my friend. I, together with Loyola Law School and the greater legal community, shall miss him. I know, however, that Bill will live on, not only in my memories, but as an example to my students of a talented lawyer and an exceptional person.

Many can recite the numerous legal accomplishments of Bill Landers. Bill graduated as an honor student from Loyola Law School in 1976. During his tenure here, he served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review*. Following graduation he practiced for two years in a law firm; he then served as a Los Angeles Deputy City Attorney, Assistant U.S. Attorney in Los Angeles, Special Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General, Deputy Associate Attorney General, Associate White House Counsel and Chief of the Public Corruption Division of the Washington, D.C., U.S. Attorney's Office.

Yet, these "paper" credentials do not begin to reflect the most outstanding qualities of Bill Landers. Bill Landers had those qualities upon which the world grades lawyers. He was a man of great joy, compassion and integrity. Bill evaluated cases and people one at a time. There were no broad categories of wrongs or of bad people. There were only individual situations that had to be examined carefully and patiently because people's lives, and the crazy things that happen to them, were involved. Our concept of prosecutorial discretion relies on people like Bill Landers. He evaluated cases and people on their merits, not on how the case would affect his or others' political careers.

Bill Landers also breathed life into those with whom he worked. When the beeper went off one too many times, calling his young prosecutors to shepherd yet another arrest or search through the criminal justice system, Bill's smile and enthusiasm would make the task so much easier. Bill Landers was a generous person who rejoiced in life. He chose to dedicate his life to serving the people of Los Angeles and the nation.

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Even Washington, D.C., could not change Bill. Long known as the place where nice people are turned into faceless bureaucrats, Bill's tenure in Washington had exactly the opposite effect. He opened the doors of the offices in Washington to those who needed help—the lawyers on the trial line, the people affected by the laws, his friends searching for guidance.

There is much to teach our law students. Of all things, however, I wish I could teach them, the foremost would be to act like Bill Landers, a "mensch."² Be someone who cares, someone who leads. Be someone who is strong, devoted, humble and righteous. Be someone who leaves a mark not only on the law but on people's lives. Be someone like Bill Landers. As Bill has shown us, with these qualities, even a short life can bring an eternity of success.

2. For those students who have taken my course, my use of a Yiddish term will hardly come as a surprise.