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Sidney Picker, Jr.: In Memoriam

Some lives are so deeply and richly lived, with such an impact on others, that remembering them is not just a duty or an obligation. It is a learning experience in understanding what a life well-lived means. Sidney Picker, Jr. was such a person. And how appropriate to learn life's lessons from one whose life was as a teacher, in Sidney's case, of international law. And so, I thank Deans Michael Scharf and Jessica Berg, and Case Western Reserve University School of Law, for this opportunity to recall my colleague, my friend and my mentor, Sidney Picker, Jr.

Others have shared their detailed reviews of the many academic accomplishments in Sidney's impressive professional life as an expert in international law. Let me only add that I believe Sidney will be remembered for his special talent for combining theory and practice in countless trend-setting projects, from the Canada-United States Law Institute to his work with Jane Picker in creating a unique project to support dozens of Russian students in a year of law study in the United States. It was for this reason that I invited Sidney to join my revival of an international law advisory board when I joined the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law, as dean in 2002. But I should also mention Sidney's idea and invitation in 1992 that I teach the nation's first comparative law course in national security law with David Bickford, then Legal Adviser of Britain's MI-5 and MI-6—a proposal, I should add, that a few years later colleagues at the Columbia School of Law rejected because, while they said they found interesting the evolving relationship of international law enforcement and foreign intelligence, "there was no law there." By that time David and his wife Cary had already become the Pickers' dear friends, with frequent visits, both in Sanibel and during the Pickers' annual stays in London each June.

The relationship that flowered so rapidly with the Bickfords was typical, another excellent example of Sidney's greatest legacy and his bequest to us all: the constantly widening circle of friends and family he leaves behind across the globe. And so, my thoughts today are about Sidney as a man my entire family came to love as deeply as anyone we have known. For my daughter, he helped to replace the father she lost as an infant. To me, an only child, Sidney took the place of an older, much wiser, brother. Obviously, we were not alone. For while Sidney

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and Jane may have had no children of their own, the extended family they created over the years knew no bounds, either by blood, relationship or, for that matter, geography. Where this remarkable couple was concerned, there were no strangers. They opened their hearts and their homes to a multitude of family and friends.

I met Sidney and Jane in July 1972 in Cleveland where I had come to learn about Jane's recent creation, The Women's Law Fund. Over the years Jane and I worked on a variety of sex-discrimination lawsuits. In doing so, almost without my realizing what was happening, a family relationship developed. Not just countless trips to Cleveland, but almost annually over four decades, my daughter and I spent many holidays with the Pickers in Maine, Mexico and eventually Sanibel. In the early 1990's, when I was then CIA General Counsel, I taught my course on three separate occasions, the third time at Cleveland State on a semester-long fellowship during the six months when Sidney and Jane provided me lodging. I came to know the Pickers, both dedicated international law professors, and their remarkable symbiotic relationship, well. They complemented each other famously. Hardly identical in personality, still it could be difficult to know where the thoughts and passions of one started and the other's ended. Theirs was a seamless relationship.

Such persistent and intimate contact offered a window into this exceptional couple. Of the two, Jane might initially be the more prominent in social interactions; getting to know Sidney was a more gradual process, but one well worth the effort. Gradually, the renaissance range of Sidney's interests and activities revealed themselves.

He was a legendary collector of old toys, with one room in their home reserved for their display. Few adults could resist the temptation to admire and touch the toys. As children, my daughter and then her sons, found them irresistible. Magically, the toys always returned to their precisely assigned places in a museum-like setting when, against all rules, they had been disturbed.

The toys were but one focus of Sidney's joy in searching through every junk shop we ever passed. His eye was unerring and a full range of charming tchotchkes graced the Pickers' home and Maine cottage. I greatly admired Sidney's talent and unique sense of interior design. And I treasure several of the items given me on permanent loan. With the attention to detail that characterized all that Sidney did—not to mention his dedication as a professor of trusts and estate law—he bequeathed one particularly attractive historic map of the Rhone River to me in his will. Although I had had the picture on a long-term loan for decades, Sidney had not lost track of it—or my love for it.

Antique hunting with Sidney was a special pleasure, something I looked forward to on our annual trips to Maine. I always hoped for a rainy day when Sidney and I might while away a few hours in the aptly named "Chicken Barn" near them, an emporium of thousands of delightful discarded items from earlier years. And I particularly

remember one exciting day with Sidney and Jane at a Maine farm auction. Somehow Sidney could spot the best items in any cornucopia of thrown-away items from long ago times. He easily identified treasures where others would see only uninteresting piles of junk and these treasures then reappeared to grace their beautifully appointed house and dining room table. While I do not recall Sidney ever being active in the kitchen as a cook, he did control all such table settings at their legendary dinner parties, bringing out delightful items as center pieces, always carefully coordinated with cutlery and dishes. In another life, Sidney could have been a talented interior designer, worthy of a place in Architectural Digest or the NY Times Sunday Magazine.

But Sidney's sense of design did not stop at collecting "put-abouts." He could visualize space and design homes, a talent on display in the house he and Jane built in Cleveland, the cabin they remodeled in Maine, and finally the retirement home they built on Sanibel Island. Builders wondered who the architect for these various structures had been when asked to implement Sidney's designs. Sidney's concepts, developed over endless hours on his laptop computer, were on particular display in the cunning diagonal placement of a swimming pool under their Sanibel home, a clever space-conserving measure to address Sidney's requirement for a swimming pool which would be long enough to support his lifetime commitment to lap swimming.

Clearly swimming was a passion of Sidney's and an almost daily event. So that they would always be ready on a moment's notice, his swimming trunks appeared permanently to be hung from the back-window hook of his brown Mercedes sedan, otherwise always in impeccable order. In Maine, almost until his last year, swimming also involved a daily half-mile swim to the island in front of their house—a feat, despite being an able swimmer myself, I was only able to manage once.

The Pickers were passionate travelers, perhaps something that would be expected of two international law professors. I found out about their extensive travels early in our relationship. One night after dinner, Sidney opened a closet door to reveal a treasure trove of carefully placed slides, an archive of chronically arranged and perfectly described little boxes of countless slides for the home slide shows then popular as after-dinner entertainment. Memorably Sidney showed pictures of a remarkable do-it-yourself bus trip they had taken as a young couple from India to London, along the Khyber Pass into areas now denied for any who might wish to follow them today. Was there anywhere they had not been? Well, yes, Sidney said, mentioning Antarctica. But that destination, too, was accomplished some years ago, shortly before their six-month around-the-world cruise in celebration of Jane's eightieth birthday.

Discussing their travel experiences was unlike such conversations with others, never boring, always full of insights, observations and descriptions of new friends made along the way. But one comment of

Sidney's stands out. In a low voice one evening Sidney turned to me and, looking at Jane, said, "She changed my life." He was referring to Jane's bold embrace of all travel, not surprising for the daughter of a foreign service officer, but perhaps unexpected for this son of California, notwithstanding his several later Fulbright grants and visitorships abroad.

California—Los Angeles in particular—where Sidney had grown up, had made a powerful impact on him, even though once graduating from Stanford Law School, his professional life was largely passed on the East Coast after earning a master's degree from Yale where he had also met Jane, a fellow law student. His father, a prolific producer of B-grade movies, had moved his family from New York to California when Sidney was a young boy and Sidney grew up in a world that created a life-long love of movies. Turner Classic Films was likely his favorite channel, and he would have been well-qualified to provide the commentary required to accompany any film on view there. His description of the stars he had known in his youth (Elizabeth Taylor was my favorite example) created the impression of a fascinating early life. Sidney was the middle of three sons and that fact, plus Jewish tradition, made unusual the "junior" reference in his name. I like to think that, as another example of family devotion and a tribute to his late father, Sidney always referred to himself as Sidney Picker, Jr. He relished taking advantage of this vast store of knowledge, inherited from his father, when in retirement on Sanibel he was able to organize an annual Oscar event.

But as with all things, Sidney never bragged about his experiences and connections. They came out only after close examination. Above all, notwithstanding his erudition on a wide variety of topics, from international and comparative law to the movie industry, Sidney was an outstanding listener, a wise counselor, thoughtful to the needs of others, reflective and quiet, although not without a sense of the absurd, as Lew Katz has so well described, or the ability to laugh at himself and, of course, his beloved Jane. A conversation with Sidney was like a warm bath—reassuring, gentle, supportive. It was Sidney and Jane to whom I first introduced the man who would become my second husband in 1997. Sidney's ever thoughtful response made him the natural person with whom to share my life's events. And once again, as so richly described in this set of remembrances, I was not alone.

Sidney's last years were punctuated with health challenges that worried us all. It was for this reason that my husband and I dropped everything and rushed to visit Jane and Sidney in Maine a year ago this past August. But contrary to the worries that had been created by a remarkable series of terrifying health events while the Pickers were on their annual trip to London and then Russia to hold their annual reunion with the Russian alumni of their successful RUSLEF program, Sidney was again himself. Warm, welcoming, with easy conversation, happy to see us, to put us at our ease. The consummate host. My wonderful friend. The brother I never had.

His loss cannot be filled. And once again, in this thought too, I am not alone.