

In Memoriam

Irwin L. Treiger

Irwin Treiger was a soft-spoken, kind, gentle, and affable person and a true exemplar of the very best and brightest in this nation and the world. Irwin combined such qualities with exceptional brilliance and creativity, extraordinary community service in his hometown of Seattle, leadership in each and every activity in which he was engaged, and real professionalism in his law practice and in his participation in the Tax Section and the American Bar Association as a whole.

Irwin died, after a brief illness, on October 20, 2013, at the age of 79 in Seattle. *The Seattle Times*, in Irwin's obituary, quoted his friends and colleagues in saying that "Irwin was a giant in the profession and a giant in civic activities," and that, in the words of a former mayor of Seattle, Irwin "would always give you good insight on how to proceed forward. . . . He was always astute."

Irwin was the 2009 recipient of the Tax Section's Distinguished Service Award, and one needs to remember some of what was said at that time, for those who never had the really good fortune to know Irwin and enjoy quality time with him.

Irwin received his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Washington, graduating Phi Beta Kappa from undergrad and first in his class from law school, and serving as a member of the Order of the Coif and editor-in-chief of the law review. He then married Betty Lou, with whom he had three children, and through them nine grandchildren.

Irwin was required by his draft board to turn down a judicial clerkship with Justice William O. Douglas. Instead, he opted for an LL.M. at NYU, and again was first in his class. He soon returned to Seattle, where he practiced law until his death.

As the Tax Section's first Vice Chair for Professional Services, Irwin worked to change the focus of Section meetings to CLE. He chaired the Section from 1988–1989, served as the Section's delegate to the ABA House of Delegates from 1990–1996, and was a member of the ABA Board of Governors for three years.

A focus solely on Irwin's career as a lawyer can never reveal what a complete and dedicated person Irwin was to Seattle and, in fact, the world. A recitation of his interests and accomplishments would take dozens of pages, and so only a few highlights can be covered here.

First, as many of us knew, Irwin loved baseball and was a dyed-in-the-wool Mariners fan. He served as head of the King County Baseball Park Commission and was instrumental in having a new stadium built, which, among many other efforts by Irwin, helped keep the Mariners in Seattle. Also, as Dick Shaw noted, Irwin went down to San Diego to watch the Padres in both their old and new ballparks, for Irwin had a goal (which many believe that he achieved) of visiting every major league baseball park in the country.

Second, Irwin enjoyed fishing and annually went on a Canadian fishing trip with his friends.

Third, Irwin cherished the Seattle Symphony and personally helped revive the Symphony in the 1980s when it was beset with financial problems. In the process, he became very close to Gerard Schwartz, the conductor, with whom he enjoyed talking about music.

Irwin's religion was very important to him. He was proud to be an observant Jew and to keep kosher. Irwin was always active in Jewish philanthropies and was president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle. In addition, he was a trustee of the Samis Foundation, which renovated a number of historic buildings in Seattle and funded Jewish culture and education in the area.

One wonders if Irwin ever slept. In addition to, and certainly not in limitation of all the above, Irwin was a major contributor to many other Seattle civic endeavors, often behind the scenes, but inevitably going into a leadership role, typically at a critical juncture in the organization's existence, not because he sought the limelight, but because others recognized his incredible abilities and implored him to take on such roles.

Irwin served as chair of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and of the Seattle Foundation, as a trustee of the Seattle Rotary, and as president of the Seattle Rotary Service Foundation. During Irwin's tenure as chair of the Chamber of Commerce, Seattle hosted the first meeting of the Asian Pacific Economic Conference, which was attended by the heads of state of almost all of the Asian Pacific countries, including President Clinton.

Irwin's community service was well recognized. In connection with Irwin's receiving the Benjamin Cardozo Award for Outstanding Service, Washington Governor Gary Locke proclaimed May 28, 1997, as "Irwin Treiger Day." In 1999, Irwin's law school classmate, former Speaker of the House of Representatives Thomas S. Foley, presented Irwin with the University of Washington Law School's Distinguished Alumnus Award.

The Tax Section and its entire membership benefitted immensely from Irwin's service, thoughtfulness, mentoring, caring and activism. Herb Beller and Stan Blend, both Chairs of the Tax Section years after Irwin's term as Chair (1988-1989), noted that, as Tax Section newcomers, they found that Irwin went out of his way to welcome them and make them comfortable in the Section.

Many of our Tax Section accomplishments either started under Irwin or followed up on what Irwin had done. Those of us who knew him, who were mentored by him, who enjoyed a meal with him (or, like Paul Sax, a smelly cigar with him) were enriched by his smile, by his love of family, life, and community—by his very presence. Those of us who did not know him were benefitted by being able to follow in his very large footsteps. Irwin will never be replaced; he will always be remembered—a truly kind and gentle person, with extraordinary talents and abilities.

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