

## IN MEMORIAM

### DETLEV VAGTS—by Peter D. Trooboff\*

Detlev Vagts, our colleague, mentor, and friend, passed away in August. Professor Vagts was Co-Editor in Chief of the *American Journal of International Law* from 1993 to 1998 with Judge Theodor Meron.

Shortly after President John F. Kennedy's burial, Leonard Bernstein spoke at a "Night of the Stars" Memorial at Madison Square Garden. He recalled that the late President had planned to include the following thought in his speech in Dallas that was never delivered:

"America's leadership must be guided by *learning* and *reason*."<sup>1</sup>

Det Vagts made *learning* and *reason* the twin pillars of his scholarship and his life. Those values came, in part, from his family and upbringing. He was the son of a German immigrant father who left Nazi Germany for America in the early 1930s despite the prominence and security that he enjoyed as an historian and a World War I veteran. Det's mother was a *New York Times* reporter and business historian; his maternal grandparents were the noted historians Charles and Miriam Beard.

A graduate of Harvard College and Law School, Det joined the Harvard Law School faculty in 1959 and was appointed Bemis Professor of International Law in 1984 following the tenure of former ASIL President Louis Sohn. Det researched and wrote dozens of law review articles, designed and wrote with his co-authors *Transnational Legal Problems* and *Transnational Business Problems*, contributed to the Restatement (Third) of the Foreign Relations Law of the United States as one of its co-reporters, served as Counselor on International Law at the State Department and, as mentioned, led this Society's flagship *Journal*.

This short memorial cannot capture or possibly do justice to the extraordinary range and depth of Professor Vagts' scholarship and teaching. Fortunately, just four years ago, his former students honored Det with a Festschrift of insightful essays, including a complete list of his publications and valuable perspectives on his career.

On my desk at home is the note that Det's two daughters sent me after receiving the October 2014 issue of *AJIL* to which I had the honor of contributing a tribute. The cover of that note has two pictures of Det—the first, smiling hand-in-hand with his wife, Dorothy; the second, enjoying a moment of discovery with his two granddaughters. That's the Det that those of us who were fortunate enough to attend his classes or work with him will always remember. Rigorous in his scholarship and never suffering fools gladly, Det was in the end and always the kindly, gentle man pictured in his daughters' note.

For his qualities as a devoted husband, father, grandfather, teacher, and scholar, we who had the privilege of knowing Det Vagts will greatly miss him.

*May his memory be for a blessing.*

\* Senior Counsel, Covington & Burling LLP.

<sup>1</sup> THE LEONARD BERNSTEIN LETTERS 455–56 (Nigel Simeone ed., 2013).