

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

**ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS ZIGURDS L. ZILE**

When a colleague with the character, vigor and value of Zigurds Zile dies, it leaves our school more barren and less interesting. No member of our faculty possessed a broader experience and background for law teaching and research. His teaching and his research covered a wide range - torts, civil procedure, land use planning, Soviet legal studies, comparative and international law.

Foley and Lardner-Bascom Emeritus Professor of Law Zigurds L. Zile died on November 26, 2002 after a short but acute bout with cancer. He had agreed to return to teaching a first year law course three months earlier to fill an unexpected vacancy and had nearly completed that assignment when felled.

Zig was born in Riga, Latvia in 1927. His family suffered under a year of Soviet occupation and three years of domination by Germany. During his unusual schooling in Latvia and Germany he achieved fluency in Latvian, German, Russian and French. (Later in his career he gained knowledge of Spanish and some Finnish). He spoke and wrote cultivated and direct English. For nearly two years the International Refugee Organization employed him as a translator before he entered the American Army in 1950. He achieved the rank of sergeant and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1953. His family moved to Milwaukee and Zig supported himself as a sheet metal worker and carpenter. The University of Wisconsin-Madison awarded him a B.A. in economics with Phi Beta Kappa honors in 1955, and his law degree in 1958. He served on and published in the Wisconsin Law Review. An LL.M. from Wisconsin followed in 1959 and a fellowship at Harvard Law School culminated a few years later in their award of an S.J.D.

The law faculty marked Zigurds as a potential teacher early in his studies and he was appointed an assistant professor of law in 1961 after completing his residency at Harvard. Already he had published four highly regarded law review articles on land planning in Wisconsin and France. He was awarded tenure early in 1964, and elevated to professor in 1966. He took emeritus status in 1990, but continued to teach half time for several more years.

The Law School appointed Zigurds with the expectation that he would devote himself to the comparative law arena with special emphasis on the Soviet legal system. Zigurds did this, and more. He became highly successful as a teacher and an expert on the law of torts and products liability. Over the course of his tenure he also taught civil procedure, comparative law (including Soviet law) and United Nations Law. Doubtless his popularity in teaching a basic first year torts class stimulated many students to undertake comparative law studies with him thereafter. The Student Bar Association awarded him the honor of "teacher of the year" in 1977. His mentorship also spawned teachers. Several former students became accomplished scholars of Soviet and Russian law.

An extensive research contract on Soviet Law from the United States Arms Control Agency (which produced a book), and a Fulbright professorship in Finland in 1977 confirm Zigurd's broad interests and extraordinary competence. He returned for an additional appointment in Finland in 1982 where he examined materials on Latvia unavailable to him there. His skills and knowledge of a civil law system brought him a Ford Foundation sponsored program to improve legal education at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. There he encapsulated his basic disposition "to rejoice with caution and despair with restraint." Thirty years later the no longer so young law professors studying under Zigurds direction testified to the value of their Wisconsin exposure. One of them served as Peruvian Ambassador to the United States. They proudly refer to themselves as "the Wisconsin boys."

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An award from Wisconsin's Sea Grant Program to evaluate protection of the Lake Superior Shoreline in 1971 illustrates Zigurds long time interest in protecting our environment. Central interests in his life included outdoor activities in and around the cabin he built in Bayfield County, canoe trips (often with his colleague, Professor Arlen Christenson) and his new home in rural Monticello in Green County shared with his beloved wife, Jacqueline Bettinger.

Zig did not escape critics. In 1975 a Soviet legal publication reviewing his work discounted it as by a "Latvian bourgeois emigré nationalist" because his work always observed "what happens." His loyalty to, and hopes for a restoration of Latvian independence informed his scholarship. His studies of Soviet law reflected his Wisconsin education, requiring him to focus as much as possible on how a legal system operates in practice. He recognized that American scholarship of Soviet law suffered for a lack of field studies, of law in action as opposed to law in the books. He wryly noted in the Columbia Law Review in 1970 that "no one should be reproached for not have conducted field surveys in the Soviet Union. Martyrdom is not required...." His book of readings entitled "Ideas and Forces in Soviet Legal History" was published by Oxford University Press (1992). He was allowed to return to Latvia in the late 1980's where he reestablished contact with surviving relatives and after the liberation of Latvia, he wrote scholarly commentaries and critical editorials for the now free Latvian press and legal periodicals.

His extensive monograph on the famous and leading case of *Vosburg v. Putney* occupies an additional and special issue of the 1992 Wisconsin Law Review. The research blends legal history, the teaching of the law and society movement, and precise legal analysis. Furthermore Zig tells an interesting and arresting story of an 1889 incident in Waukesha High School that produced three trials and three appeals. The decisions supply the foundation of modern personal injury law and remain a staple in first year law study throughout the country.

Zigurds Zile leaves his wife, Jacqueline, three daughters from a previous marriage, Mara Zile of Chicago, Anda Pyle of Hillsdale, Michigan, and Inga Zile of Milwaukee, and one of his oldest fondest friends, a cousin, Arnolds Eihvalds of Ogre, Latvia. He harbored a great spirit - such men are rare.

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