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A Life Well Lived

Sarah Aviles

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THE NEWS

A Life Well Lived

By *Editor-in-Chief Sarah Aviles (2L)*

At 7 o'clock on the dot, six days a week, Professor Charles Koch would pull into his usual parking spot. He was always the first to arrive, before any of his colleagues: "No one ever beat Charles," confirms Professor Ron Rosenberg. His dear friend, Professor Alemante Selassie, still glances at that usual parking space – close to the school, but not on the circle (to avoid being side-swiped) – expecting to see Professor Koch's car announcing his presence.

During the day, Professor Koch's office door remained open, inviting students or faculty to interrupt his continuous research and study. He would greet you with a shy smile and a quiet word of welcome. If the door was closed, one might find him downstairs, teaching a class on Administrative law or European Union law. "Charles Koch was a remarkable professor and person," writes Ian Ralby, a William and Mary law school graduate. "He managed to take incredibly dry subjects and, with an equally dry sense of humour, point out the ridiculous and entertaining side of them so as to make them both understandable and enjoyable. He seemed to always be amused with life, which made him such a pleasure to have as a professor and a friend. The lessons I learned in the courses I took with Charles now have direct bear-

cerely regret that when I next return to Williamsburg, I will not have the chance to tell him of how frequently I am reminded of his classes."

Ian's words are echoed by Brian Soiset, a 2006 graduate and a Drapers Scholar



Professor Koch with one of his dogs

who writes: "I was fortunate to have taken a couple of his classes. He was a truly gifted teacher. I'm nearly six years out of law school now, and only a few classes have really stuck with me in that time. His Administrative Law class is one of them. His love of and passion for the topic really shone through in the class, and for me at least, it became infectious."

health didn't permit him to stay as long as he used to, to teach as many classes as he once did, or to talk as easily as he had in the past, it never affected his punctuality, enthusiasm, or subtle sense of humor.

Around lunchtime, he and Professor Selassie might take a leisurely walk to the bookstore, discussing anything of interest, from current events to current intellectual pursuits. Or he might gather some friends and go to lunch. "He loved going to restaurants or having a glass of wine with friends," says Professor Warren. At 3 o'clock each afternoon, Professor Koch would pack up his things and head home to his wife, Denise, and their son, Andrew. This, more or less, has been his routine since 1979 when Charles Koch was hired to help transform the law school from a tiny program in the basement of Tucker Hall on the main campus, to the nationally renowned school that exists today.

Professor Lynda Butler, hired the same year as Professor Koch, remembers him in those early days. The picture she paints is quite different from the quiet, dignified professor with whom most current students are familiar. Back then, a young, single Professor Koch, driving a rusty orange 240Z with an old hanger sticking out of the top as an antenna, could be seen on the volleyball, basketball or tennis courts or in the field playing co-ed softball with the law students.

“So many people felt they had a special position in Charles’s life, and with Charles, they really did.”

son, who is now a senior at UVA, Professor Koch continued his athletic pursuits, though on a smaller scale: for example, teaching his son to play tennis as his father had taught him.

Instead, Williamsburg cultivated his passion for nature and the outdoors. “Charles would get to our house when the stars were still in the sky. The dogs would be barking – our dogs, and his dog, Chris – and the car would be full of their decoys and guns,” Professor Jayne Barnard reminisces. Professor Koch had been one of her husband’s best friends since 1985; the two were drawn together by a passion for bird hunting and fishing. “Charles would tolerate the bad motels, lumpy beds, cold nights, all for the thrill of the chase. It was their secret world. He led a distinctive double life. I think he reveled in the outdoor life next to his quiet academic life.”

From the time and energy he dedicated

to them, most people might assume that these recreational pursuits were Professor Koch’s true passion. But therein lay the marvel of this man: few can claim such a diverse, yet perfectly balanced field of interests and passions. Although he had a remarkably close relationship with his family and friends and dedicated much time to recreational hobbies, Professor Koch was also a highly regarded legal scholar. The majority of his early career was devoted to becoming an expert in Administrative Law. Seven years as the Editor-in-Chief of the Adminis-



Professor Charles Koch on his last birthday with Professor Selassie, Professor Bernard, and Judge Felton

trative Law Review, a past president of the Committee on Sections and Annual Meetings of the Administrative Law Section of the Association of American Law Schools, author or co-author of thirty-nine articles and nine books, his schol-

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 daily prowess is unique even among his gifted colleagues. His most significant academic accomplishment, many would say, is his widely renowned and highly regarded three volume Treatise on Administrative Law that has been used by students and judges alike.

"A lot of people could have been satisfied with that success," says Professor Rosenberg. But Professor Koch loved to learn and never hesitated to self-educate, whether it was a CD course on Opera music, auditing Professor Warren's Islamic Law class, or soliciting research papers from students on topics he wanted to know more about. An interest in international legal systems and history inspired him to teach himself the laws and systems of the European Union. He became the Assistant Chief Reporter of the Administrative Law of the European Union Project of the American Bar Association and a member of the United Nations Affairs Coordinating Committee of the American Bar Association.

"He had a fantastically curious and open mind," Professor Christie Warren recalls. "Charles loved learning – about anything. He had the most inquisitive mind I've ever come across." Professor Warren and Professor Koch became friends almost immediately upon her arrival, despite diametrically opposing political views. They shared a deep professional respect for each other as well as a shared interest in comparative legal justice systems. The two of them co-taught an interactive course on the French legal system. He and Professor Warren flew in four French judges to hear cases that the students conducted using French law and procedure. Professor Koch believed that law school was a place not only for theoretical knowledge but for practical learning experience as well.

Although no one can be sure why Professor Koch didn't retire when he was diagnosed with cancer three years ago, many suspect that Professor Koch continued his work because it was such a large part of his life, a passion he couldn't give up.

"He had a tremendous loyalty to this place," Professor Rosenberg says, referring to William and Mary Law School. "When he was part of a place, it was part of him." Even the final tribute to his memory has been dedicated to the students of William and Mary Law school in the form of the Charles H. Koch Memo-

rial Fund for International Studies, designed to help and encourage students to work and gain experience abroad.

Yet, despite all his achievements and all that he has given to this school, a majority of the current student body did not know Professor Koch. They might read a list of his achievements and be duly impressed, but they can't read his greatest success: the regard that every person who has ever met him feels for this kind, quiet man.

"So many people felt they had a special position in Charles's life, and with Charles, they really did," says Professor Barnard.

"He was compassionate and time to get to know you as a person," remarks his Graduate Research Fellow, Tony Guo (3L).

I only recently met Professor Koch when he taught my EU law class. Though I had little knowledge of his professional success, I did know that the man who taught me three times a week was a friendly, approachable teacher with a subtle sense of humor. When I heard of his sudden passing on Saturday, February 18, 2012, my thoughts were not of his great accomplishments – remarkable though they were – but of the quiet professor who always had time to answer my questions after class or to share an amusing anecdote about the torrid romance of Sarkozy and Merkel.

"He was an amazing mentor. He was very selective, but when he chose you he'd devote so much of his time [to you]," Professor Barnard recalls, a sentiment echoed by Professors Butler, Sellasie and Warren. Professor Koch's openness to new ideas, his willingness to listen and to help people, and his quiet humility attracted friends and admirers. His absence will be felt, not just in the law school, but at the international Administrative law conference he was coordinating in Luxemburg, in

the ABA committees on which he served and often ran, in the woods alongside his fellow hunters and fishermen, even among his three beloved dogs.

"If you are lucky enough to have a friend like Charles, make sure to treasure him or her. Friends like him are not easily replaceable," says Professor Warren. "These are the people worth knowing. Even when you are not aware of it, they quietly change your life."

*Rest in Peace
 Charles H. Koch
 1944-2012*