

In memoriam:
Professor William Aubrey Tetley, C.M., Q.C.
(1927-2014)

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It is not easy for me to write this eulogy, because it is about the distinguished Professor Bill Tetley, as he was fondly referred to, a lawyer, politician, law professor, author, colossus of the maritime legal profession, collector of Canadian art, gentleman, beloved father and husband, my supervisor and dear friend, who died in Montreal, Quebec (Canada) on the 1 July 2014 at the age of 87.

My life has been changed forever in 1988 when I was granted the Government of Canada Award to pursue my post-graduate studies in comparative law at McGill Law Faculty of Law in Montreal. Despite of the notorious fact that McGill had been already renowned as one of the best academic institutions in the world, it meant to me even more because of its famous maritime law expert, Professor William Tetley, whose impressive “blue” thick books could be found in every library of any serious shipowner, ship broker, agent, Chandler, insurer, maritime lawyer or any other maritime-orientated stakeholder all over the world. He proved to be a fantastic symbiosis between practice and theory, a lucid, concise, common sense, humorous and sometimes ironic lecturer, *l'enfant terrible* of international maritime law whose magnetic charisma impressed every student.

At this sad occasion I would like to share with you two little anecdotes which are very self-descriptive. Firstly, it happened to me for the first time that any professor would invite me to his home, together with other students and our partners, initially for an “*election party*” in late September 1989 to participate at the election pool (“*at a cost of \$2.00 for each ballot*”) in order to guess a number of seats for Liberals, Parti Quebecois, Equality Party, NPD and Others. It was great fun, also because of plenty of food, wine and beer with “*special recognition for those wearing bow-ties and especially for those wearing hand-tied bow ties.*”

Secondly, I remember him once in the class room commenting on losing his argument at the Supreme Court of Canada in the following typical way of his own:

“The Supreme Court paid no attention to my big, long argument. It was 7 to 0, not even 6 to 1. It was like being killed on a green light – you were right, but you were dead.”

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After I obtained my doctoral degree (D.C.L.) under Tetley's invaluable supervision my wife and I, together with our freshly born daughter decided to go back home (we came from Yugoslavia and returned to independent Slovenia), however, we remained close colleagues and friends ever since until his departure to another planet. He visited us once in Slovenia with his beloved wife Rosslyn (all Tetley's books are dedicated to her!) to deliver a few unforgettable lectures at the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transportation and Faculty of Law of the University of Ljubljana, as well as to the members of Maritime Law Association of Slovenia which elected him as our most distinguished Honorary Member.

If we refer to his popular website *Tetley's Maritime & Admiralty Law*⁽¹⁾ we can instantly feel his incredible knowledge, as well as his legendary sense of humor and a bit of sarcasm. For example, he had to shrink his immense CV "*in forty words or less*" for the Law of the Sea Conference in Rotterdam, offering the Alternative One:

"Practiced law eighteen years, politics eight years, taught law at McGill & Tulane & elsewhere for thirty years; author of Marine Cargo Claims, 1966, 1978, 1988 & 2008, Maritime Liens and Claims, 1984 & 1998, International Conflict of Laws, 1994, International Maritime and Admiralty Law, 2003, the Glossary of Maritime Law Terms, 2 Ed., 2004, and The October Crisis, 1970: An Insider's View, 2006."

And the Alternative Two:

"Practiced law eighteen years, politics eight years, taught law and wrote books thirty years. Takes this occasion to send wishes to friends who have removed his name from their Xmas card lists and to whom he has done the same."

His long CV is, of course, so extensive that it cannot be reproduced on these pages but it will be forever engraved in the history of international maritime law.⁽²⁾

Professor Tetley was the first person informing me about the eminent IMO International Maritime Law Institute in Malta (IMLI), suggesting to write a letter to Director and asking him for a part-time "job". Indeed, when we met for the first time about 16 years ago Professor David Attard told me frankly that he gave me a chance to proof myself lecturing at IMLI just because of Tetley's flattering recommendation. As thoughtfully mentioned in the *IMLI e-News*,⁽³⁾ expressing condolences to Professor Tetley's family, for IMLI, Bill Tetley was one of its first and closest friends, a true herald in the spreading of the good news of the establishment of an Institute to be dedicated to serving the rule of international maritime law through the training of lawyers from developing countries around international circles. His faith and enthusiasm for such an institute sparked a keen interest in the Institute by the maritime world.

(1) <http://www.mcgill.ca/maritimelaw/>. The website was and perhaps still is consulted in approximately 5,000 sessions (averaging 6 minutes per session) each week by visitors from around the world (approximately 250,000 hits per month) and has been cited by many courts, including the ex-House of Lords and the U.S. Court of Appeals.

(2) See <http://www.mcgill.ca/maritimelaw/tetleycv/longcv/>.

(3) Vol. II, Issue No. 39, 8 July 2014.

William Tetley⁽⁴⁾ was educated in Montreal public schools, and then the Royal Canadian Naval College and served in the Royal Canadian Navy Reserve as a midshipman, Sub-Lieutenant and Lieutenant. He obtained his B.A. from McGill University (1948) and LL.B. from Laval University (1951) and then practiced maritime law for 18 years for Martineau, Walker, Allison, Beaulieu & Tetley, which became Fasken Martineau DuMoulin. Subsequently he was a member of the Québec National Assembly for eight years, including almost seven years as a Cabinet member under Premier Robert Bourassa. In 1976, he joined McGill Law Faculty, where he has taught international maritime law, private international law and consumer law. He was Visiting Professor of Maritime and Commercial Law at Tulane University, New Orleans (U.S.A.) from 1984 to 1998 and one year later the Tulane University named an annual lecture series in his honor, referred to as the annual Tetley Maritime Law Lecture. He was appointed a visiting professor at Dalian University in 1996, and lectured at many other universities and conferences around the world, for instance at Cambridge, Aix-en-Provence and Southampton.

William Tetley earned many honors throughout his long career. In 1981, he won the Lilar Prize of Brussels, awarded every three years by the Comité Maritime International (CMI) for a leading work on maritime law published in any language in the world. In 1994, he was named a Honorary Life Vice-President of the CMI and in 1995 a Member of the Order of Canada. He received the F.R. Scott Award for Distinguished Service from McGill University's Faculty of Law in 2007 to recognize his significant contribution to law and the life of the Faculty, and his exceptional service and leadership to society. In 2004, a fellowship (the William Tetley Fellowship) was named after him, for doctoral and master's studies at McGill University. Last but not least, he was an award-winning author of books on international maritime law covering areas on Conflicts of Laws, Maritime Liens and Mortgages, and Marine Cargo Claims. His books have been translated into many languages, including Russian, Japanese and Chinese.

As beautiful stated in the *IMLI e-News*, the legend in maritime law's lasting legacy will undoubtedly be the books Prof. Tetley has written but also his vast knowledge of, expertise and enthusiasm for maritime law, which he shared with all, students, practitioners and the maritime world at large. He is already sadly missed by all of us, by all those people, institutions and by maritime lawyers throughout the world, whose lives he touched, including IMLI. We bid him farewell and know that his maritime soul will keep marching on.

Let me conclude this modest essay with his own words which speak for themselves eternally:⁽⁵⁾

“Whether we be judges, lawyers, professors, students, commercial men and women, or persons connected in some way with maritime commerce, we are all pilgrims in search of a just and comprehensible international maritime law.”

See you on the other side of cosmic ocean, Bill, your spirit *vivat, crescat, floreat!*

⁽⁴⁾ The following paragraph is taken from one of his last books - W. TETLEY: *Marine Cargo Claims*, Fourth Edition, Volume 1, Chapters 1 to 31, Les Éditions Yvon Blais Inc., Montreal 2008, pp. xxi-xxii.

⁽⁵⁾ W. TETLEY: *Marine Cargo Claims*, Third Edition, Les Éditions Yvon Blais Inc., Montreal 1988, p. xvi.