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DAVE KOCHERY: MY RECOLLECTIONS

DAVID D. SIEGEL*

My friendship with Dave Kochery began in the early 1960's. I had just begun teaching and I'd been invited to participate in what at the time was an experiment in seminars for judges. It came to be known as the Crotonville Conference, after its Westchester location overlooking the Hudson River. Dave had undertaken to coordinate it: to determine the subjects that would go into the program and the panels of judges, lawyers and professors who would lead the discussion groups. Crotonville quickly became a great success and a model for judicial seminars around the country. Its success in New York is marked by the fact that it has become an annual event, a four-day meeting of trial judges, principally Supreme Court justices, that takes place in the latter part of June.

Dave Kochery was largely responsible for this success. He had the ideal combination of intellect, leadership and personality to get a disparate group of people together regularly to trade ideas and to learn from one another. Continuing legal education for judges is a nationwide undertaking today, New York was at the forefront of its creation, and Dave Kochery was one of its originators. It is one of his monuments.

Arrival day at the Crotonville Conference had the people who would be planning and presenting the programs sitting down to lunch for informal discussions of their agendas, and afterwards gathering in the lecture hall for Dave's welcome and his instructions, or, the way he delivered them, his suggestions. He had a warm and winning way, and I think it was his personality that set the tone for the meeting. He was able to get his wishes across—always in the form of recommendations—softly, and yet, when he'd make the rounds during the course of the seminars themselves after things got under way, we were aware that we were being watched and appraised, and that he was gathering up material for his next round of suggestions.

The judges would begin to arrive in late afternoon and early evening on arrival day, and the sessions would begin on the following day. Dave watched over things like an experienced maitre-d'.

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He was always available to assist, and the air of informality and relaxation that pervades the Crotonville Conference to this day is largely a reflection of Dave Kochery.

He was a grand companion. He and I were New York Practice teachers and that gave us acres of common ground to travel. We traveled it often. When one has spent much time with a subject, there tend to be fewer and fewer people he can discuss it with without constantly reviewing the basics. For me, Dave was one of those few.

His perennial good cheer was a delight to all of his friends, and here, too, Crotonville was a beneficiary. The evening hours were the informal hours. The Conference takes place on an old estate that the General Electric Company has refurbished as a kind of training institute for its executives, and the New York Office of Court Administration has been one of the few outside groups that GE has allowed to use it. The informal hours of the Crotonville Conference pass in one of the buildings called the Recreation Hall. Here Dave would hold forth, always at the center of some lively group. His laughter was one of the prominent sounds on those occasions. It was not hard for Dave to laugh, or make others laugh. I miss him.

A man by the name of John Russell has been the manager of the Crotonville site from its outset. John is the perfect host and another reason for the meeting's success. John and Dave were friends and John always contemplated with pleasure those early days of summer that would bring Dave back to another Crotonville gathering. John knows that I was asked to write this memoir about Dave. He feels as I do about Dave's passing.

I have spent time with Dave on many other occasions, but since we came to know each other best at the judges' meeting, it was about Dave in that setting that I wanted to write.

Wherever he was known he will be missed.

