

Dear all,

I need to inform you that John Dunne passed away last night, after nine decades of deeply honorable and significant life. Senator John Dunne. Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights John Dunne. Heroic figure during the tragedy at Attica Prison John Dunne. Member of the Capital Defender Office Board, the Prisoners Legal Services Board, the Indigent Legal Services Board – that John Dunne. Perhaps the most principled and dedicated public servant I have ever known: that John Dunne. I have not yet seen an obituary, though I can recommend to you a lovely remembrance on WAMC radio today by Alan Chartock, on behalf of the station's Board of Trustees on which John served. Mr. Chartock accurately describes John as "the best of the best"; one who "always stood up to the bullies and the bad guys"; and "a great man who knew right from wrong."

John was one of the original members of the ILS Board, dating to its creation in 2010. He has been a towering figure on the Board. It is not too much, I think, to call him the conscience of the Board. Throughout my almost 10 year tenure as Director, John called me almost weekly to chat about the Office's progress, to inquire how our staff was doing, to brainstorm challenges ahead, sometimes to share an anecdote that always had a point and helped me navigate the shoals of Albany. In these chats, it was sometimes hard to know whether I was conversing with my best friend or the world's sagest cross-examiner, for John asked hard questions about important subjects. He challenged me to be better than I thought I was; and way better than I would have been without his wisdom and honesty.

John had known his time was short since early this year. In early September, he invited me down to his family farmhouse in Columbia County to reminisce, and to share with me documents he had saved ever since the 2010 selection process for the position I now hold. We sipped coffee, we shared confidences; we watched his sheep go to pasture. He told me of his determination to attend in person the Board's September 25 meeting, at which important topics including the coming fiscal year ILS budget request would be considered. He was not able to attend that meeting in person; but he participated in it vigorously – and within two minutes following its conclusion, he called to tell me it was the best Board meeting we'd ever had.

A couple of weeks elapsed without a further call from John, so I called him. When he returned my call, he told me that it might well be the last time we could talk. If so, he said, he had a question or two to ask: had we, in our partnership, accomplished very important, transformative progress? I assured him that we had. Would that progress be sustained and made permanent, and extend to include parental representation? I told him two things: yes, it would be sustained and made permanent and extended; and that everything we do from this point on will be built upon the solid foundation that, in large measure due to his contributions, the Office and Board have together constructed.

A few years ago, John sent me the attached article he wrote as a young county court attorney in January, 1962 – over a year before the United States Supreme Court's pronouncement of a right to counsel in felony cases in the *Gideon* decision. In his article, entitled "Public Defender – Pro and Con", John weighed the arguments and, after citing Samuel Johnson's description of the "art and power" attributed to members of the legal profession, concluded as follows: "The constitution guarantees that all who come before the Bar of Justice are entitled to the aid of one schooled in that art and power regardless of their material means. A community blessed with our abundance cannot afford to ration justice – a condition that may well result from a failure to establish an adequate defender system."

We have lost a truly great and moral man. Yet let us not mourn, but rather marvel at and appreciate how much John Dunne has given during his lifetime to the Right to Counsel and the principles of Fairness and Equal Justice. John lived every day with honor and distinction. We who have been privileged to work with him honor his life today, and in the future we will do our best to emulate his example.

Bless you John Dunne. May your memory long be honored.

Bill