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## In Memoriam: George M. Armstrong, Jr.

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## **In Memoriam**

**GEORGE M. ARMSTRONG, JR.**

The LSU Law Center community was greatly saddened and diminished by the death of our friend and colleague, George M. Armstrong, Jr., known to us all as "Jack," on September 9, 1990, after a gallant struggle against a frightful illness.

Professor Armstrong joined the LSU law faculty in 1984, coming to us from the faculty of the New York Law School and the New York law firm of Alexander and Green. Raised in rural Tennessee and educated first at Vanderbilt where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Magna Cum Laude in 1974, Jack retained his courtly southern manner and was pleased to return to the part of the country into which he was born.

The broad gauge and remarkable depth of Professor Armstrong's intellect was nurtured and seasoned in the United Kingdom where he earned an M.A. at the University of Sussex in 1975 and at Princeton where he was awarded a second master's in 1977. His thoughts then turned to law and this took him to the University of Pennsylvania from which he was graduated, Order of the Coif, in 1981. Through law school, however, Jack retained his interest in classical scholarship and was rewarded with a Ph.D. from Princeton in 1982.

By the time Professor Armstrong arrived at LSU he was ready to put his impeccable credentials and eclectic interests to work, and he did so in the classroom teaching an array of courses ranging from torts, civil and common law property, to U.C.C. and debtor and creditor, to Soviet law.

Jack's intellectual interests spanned the world and were reflected in a bibliography which would have been a source of pride to a scholar many years his senior and which included books on The Soviet Law of Property, Louisiana Landlord and Tenant, and Law and Market Society in Mexico. A scholar who went directly to the source, Professor Armstrong traveled widely in the Soviet Union and could often be found in his law center office reading Russian language publications. When questioned about his facility with languages, Jack would say Russian was easy, once one had mastered the cyrillic alphabet, and,

as if to prove it to doubters, taught himself Spanish when his research interests shifted southward.

Even in his recreation Professor Armstrong's intellect did not rest. Not long before his death, Jack completed the manuscript of a novel, a mystery set in Spain at the time of the Inquisition.

However formidable, Professor Armstrong's academic and intellectual power and achievements will fade in the memory of his friends long before the recollection that Jack was one of the nicest people ever to grace our profession. In a community where pretension is not unknown, Jack had none. No one can recall his ever having said a harsh or unkind word about anyone, no mean feat in a man with strongly held views. Whether the discussion was of law, politics or the foibles of his ugly brown Camaro, Jack's low key humor and mischievous smile were always a delight.

A few years ago, having decided that Baton Rouge would remain his home, Jack decided to add a dog to his family. Completely in character, he discarded any notion of a pure or exotic breed and instead returned from the Animal Shelter with Anna, a dog only its mother and Jack could love. Shortly after Anna's arrival Jack compounded his kindness by taking in another dog of dubious pedigree so Anna would not be lonely.

Always a gentleman in the classroom as well as out, Professor Armstrong's door was never closed to student inquiry, and as coach of the very successful Jessup Moot Court team, he established a rapport with the team members that was a wonder to behold.

No encapsulation of Jack Armstrong's life would be a complete or credible effort without mention of his extraordinary relationship with his parents, Patricia and George Armstrong, Sr., of Columbia, Tennessee. The first time that many of his law center colleagues ever visited Jack's home was at an event so memorable and touching to those of us whose relationship with our parents is characterized by distance, emptiness or regret, that it will never be forgotten. Jack hosted a reception in honor of his parents at his Baton Rouge home to which the law faculty was invited. The turnout was nearly total, including some whose attendance at law center functions is rare, and the love and pride that radiated between and among Jack and his parents was palpable and wondrous. In many dinner conversations in subsequent years Jack's conversation was often punctuated by tales of visits home to Tennessee and of vacations planned or taken with his parents. The relationship was magic.

When Professor Armstrong first fell ill in December of 1988 and was forced to miss the Spring semester, his friends of course were mightily concerned both for his physical and emotional health. As we should have expected, when Jack returned to us he had retained his

humor and faced an uncertain and frightening future with the wonderful mix of optimism, realism, and dignity which characterized his life.

We shall all miss him and treasure his memory.

*Joseph T. Bockrath*