

Remembering Peter Gubser (II)

Additional Remarks by Dr. Anthony at Washington, D.C.'s Cosmos Club on the Occasion of a Gathering of Peter Gubser's Wife, Daughters, other Family Members, Friends, and Colleagues, on September 20, 2010, to Commemorate Dr. Gubser's Life.

"It is an honor, a privilege, and a challenge to contribute remarks about Peter in addition to those of John Richardson, Peter's Mother and Brother, Peter and Annie's daughters Christie and Sasha, Les Janka, and Mayor Jeffrey Slavin. But ameliorating the challenge is that the task is in some ways more natural and comfortable than many might imagine. That is to say that, in the case of John, Les, myself -- and Peter, whose life we commemorate today -- following each other around in meetings and various mutual endeavors is what the four of us have been doing for the majority of our adult lives. Indeed John, Les, Peter and I have been cofounders of or co-participant activists in one or another Middle East-related organization, project, program, event, or activity nonstop for the past three decades and counting.

"Peter was frequently front and center in our efforts and deliberations that often joined the four of us not only as a team. In many ways we were also like Sisyphus in our constantly trying, as it were, to push boulders up a mountain. In so doing, whenever we had a meeting with Peter in attendance -- and one thing about Peter in the organizations of which he was a member is that he, more than anyone else, was *always* in attendance -- he was the exemplar of principled standards of governance. He also usually stood out for being the most emphatic that a nonprofit organization's leadership, management, staff, and employees had to be treated not just fairly but, to the extent possible from a recognition, appreciation, and benefits perspective, also generously. In addition, in all the discussions that took place when Peter, John, Les, our fellow board members and I addressed these and related matters, Peter was the one more than any other who consistently insisted that leadership, trust, and responsibility proceed hand in hand with transparency and accountability.

"Simultaneously, Peter was ever the voice of reason. He never lost sight of the maxim that if one would be a good leader, one has no choice but to continuously and effectively do one's best to address the legitimate needs, concerns, interests, and objectives of those whom one represents.

"In what ways did Peter do this?

"In one way that was unforgettable for many if not most of us who are here today, he did so by dedicating the bulk of his professional life to easing the pain of those who, in one way or another, have been wronged, injured, and deprived of their human rights. In the case of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, on whose behalf he worked the longest, he was driven by the need to help those whose land and water had been illegally seized, whose homes had been illegally demolished, whose legitimate quests for freedom and elemental dignity in their own land had long been illegally denied.

"Peter was ever mindful of the effects of human-inflicted cruelty and tragedy upon the abused, the defenseless, and the devastated. In knowing a great deal about these matters from having observed their effect first hand, he was all about chipping away at, and lessening, the manifestations of injustice. He was all about giving the downtrodden and dispossessed reason to hope that there was indeed a reason to hope. In these and other ways, Peter was not naive. Nor was he overly idealistic. To the contrary, he was something else -- he was all about being fair and just. He was, above all, moral in the marrow of his bones.

"Peter was more than good at his job -- he was great at it. Among the things others and I appreciated about Peter the most was the way he was forever focused -- he was, in Arabic, *miyya bil miyya* -- 100 per cent into everything he did. He was also perpetually principled. He was perennially persistent in purpose. He was unceasingly anxious, as best he could, to do the right thing in the right way for the right reasons at the right time for the right people. In these ways and more, Peter, more than most, was often successful. When he wasn't, it was never for lack of trying.

"For all these reasons, Peter will remain an exceptionally hard act to follow.

"But try hard to follow his example we must. To that end I ask two related questions. Being mere mortals, and therefore hardly bereft of blemish, what might each of us do to merit his mantle? What might each of us do to lengthen his legacy?"