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# Indiana Law Review



Volume 34 No. 2 2001

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

AUG 17 2001

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SCHOOL

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David Ray Hanke

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INDIANA LAW REVIEW

(ISSN 0090-4198)

Published four times a year by Indiana University. Editorial and Business Offices are located at:

*Indiana Law Review*  
735 W. New York Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-5194  
(317) 274-4440

**Subscriptions.** Current subscription rates for an academic year are \$30.00 per four-issue (domestic mailing) and \$35.00 (foreign mailing). Unless the Business Office receives notice to the contrary, all subscriptions will be renewed automatically. *Address changes must be received at least one month prior to publication to ensure prompt delivery and must include old and new address and the proper zip code.*

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The INDIANA LAW REVIEW (ISSN 0090-4198) is the property of Indiana University and is published quarterly by the Indiana University School of Law—Indianapolis, which assumes complete editorial responsibility thereof. Current subscription rates for an academic year are: one year domestic \$30.00; foreign \$35.00. Send all correspondence to Editorial Specialist, *Indiana Law Review*, Indiana University School of Law—Indianapolis, 735 W. New York Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202-5194. Publication office: 735 W. New York Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202-5194. Periodicals postage paid at Indianapolis, Indiana 46201.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to INDIANA LAW REVIEW, 735 W. New York Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202-5194.



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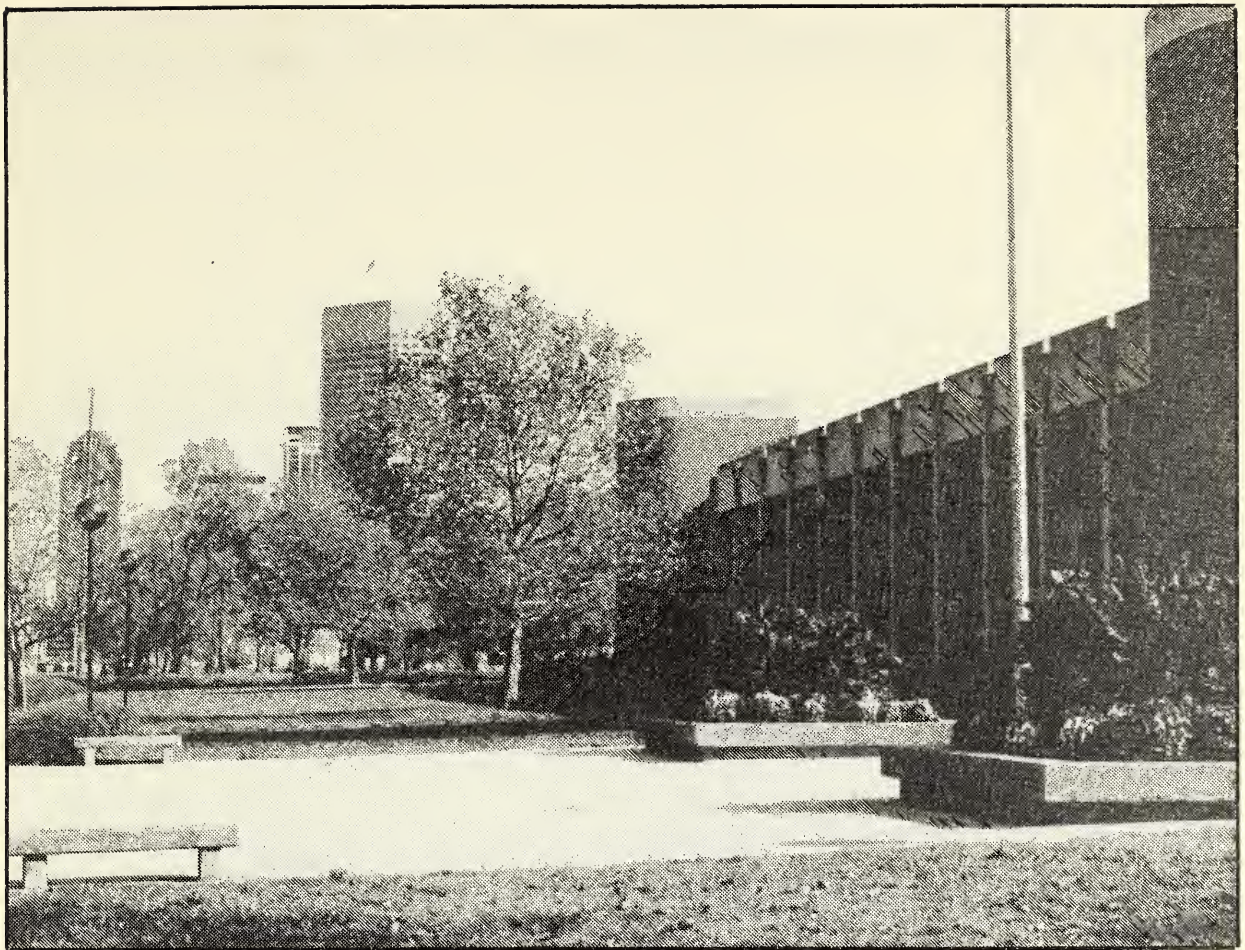
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Volume 34

2001

Number 2

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**JUNE STARR**



## TRIBUTE

### TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR JUNE STARR

DAVID RAY PAPKE\*

June Starr retired from the School of Law faculty during the summer of 2000. She joined the faculty as an Associate Professor of Law in 1994 and was promoted to Professor of Law shortly before her retirement. During her years in Indianapolis, Professor Starr taught large courses in the family law and environmental law areas as well as specialized seminars involving anthropology and the law, the law of children, and international law. Professor Starr enriched the School of Law in countless ways, and by reflecting at the time of her retirement on her major contributions, we might be better able to make those contributions a living part of the institution's future.

#### I. A SENSE OF ACADEMIC ADVENTURE

To begin with, Professor Starr brought to the School of Law a tremendous openness to and excitement regarding the full range of academic and intellectual experiences. Trained as a cultural anthropologist at Columbia University (M.A., 1961) and the University of California—Berkeley (Ph.D., 1970), she rose through the ranks to become a Full Professor of Anthropology at the State University of New York in Stony Brook. During leaves from Stony Brook, she served as a Fulbright Professor at the Indian Law Institute in New Delhi and at the Ankara Law School in Ankara, Turkey. From 1981-83, she was also a Professor of Sociology at the University of Rotterdam's Erasmus Law School in Holland. In these places and pursuits she participated in dialogues with a world community of scholars and thinkers.

In much the same way that Professor Starr reached from the United States to experiences in other parts of the world, she reached within the United States from her first discipline of anthropology to other paradigms and perspectives. She was one of the founding figures in the Law and Society Association, an umbrella organization for scholars in the social sciences with an interest in law and legal issues. Fortunately for the Indiana University School of Law—Indianapolis, Professor Starr found that the discipline of law in and of itself was of great interest. Hence, she spent a year in the Yale Law School's prestigious Law and

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Modernization Program and then earned degrees in law at Yale (M.S.L., 1990) and Stanford (J.D., 1992).

Professor Starr's amazing curiosity and ambitiousness led to a wealth of contacts, a good number of whom lectured at the School of Law during Professor Starr's years in Indianapolis. More fundamentally, she superbly represented the questing and exploring which can be the heart of academic life. She was an antidote to the tendency to stay at home, both physically and intellectually. She was our leading adventurer.

## II. CONTEXTUAL JURISPRUDENCE

Not surprisingly given Professor Starr's abundance of international and interdisciplinary experiences, she developed a distinctive understanding of the law, and this understanding enlivened the School of Law. Stated simply, Professor Starr thought law was best understood in a cultural, political and historical context. Put in reverse terms, she gave little truck to the old idea that law should be understood as an autonomous discipline. Thinking of law as something existing merely onto itself, in her opinion, was something of a "false consciousness," one which might be seductive for a secular priesthood of practicing lawyers but one which could never produce critical and enduring thought about law.

Professor Starr's understanding of law is particularly evident in her scholarly publications. These include literally dozens of reviews, essays and articles as well as three superb book-length studies. Two of the books, *Dispute and Settlement in Rural Turkey: An Ethnography of Law* (1978) and *Law as Metaphor: From Islamic Courts to the Palace of Justice* (1992), established Professor Starr as the United States' leading expert on Turkish law and legal systems. The third book, *History and Power in the Study of Law* (1989, co-edited with Jane Collier), included Professor Starr's own work as well as that of a distinguished group of scholars. Any reader of these works can see clearly Starr's forceful intellect, her sensitivity to nuance and contradictions, and her boldness regarding law's cultural, political and historical characteristics.

Professor Starr, it should be underscored, brought her understanding of the law into her classrooms as well. Many professors fully appreciate the sociohistorical features of law in their private thought and publications but take the easier route of authoritatively serving up legal rules, corollaries and exceptions in their classes. But this was not Professor Starr's approach. She is to be commended for insisting *in the classroom* that great lawyers appreciate the ways law dwells within culture, politics and history. The great sociolegal jurists who helped dethrone formalist legal thought—Holmes, Cardozo, Brandeis—surely smiled down on Professor Starr as she taught.

## III. SELF-REFLECTION AND CRITIQUE

When one has a spirit of academic adventure and when one appreciates law in contextual ways, it is perhaps inevitable that one will also stop to evaluate and appraise one's social situation. Professor Starr, we can note happily, was blessed with a knack for self-reflection. She had the ability and the willingness to



critique the sprawling edifice of legal education and the particular structure called the Indiana University School of Law—Indianapolis.

Day in and day out Professor Starr was a source of insight about our law school. In a friendly and constructive way, she told us what we did right and what we did wrong. She saw the faculty, student body, and administration in an especially bright light, and we all profited from her perceptions.

One case in point: Starr knew that all primate societies were complicated by “greybacks,” that is, senior males of the species. More important than the grey hair growing on their upper-backs is the “greyback” tendency to fuss and fume, to fight over turf, and to cause a ruckus. Human “greybacks” have much in common with their counterparts among the chimps and gorillas, and the law school faculty has no shortage of “greybacks”—alas, the author of this tribute included.

#### IV. THE ROAD AHEAD

Since her retirement, Professor Starr has returned to the house she occupied during her years on the State University of New York at Stony Brook faculty. Built on a bluff overlooking the Long Island Sound, her home is truly beautiful and also in close proximity to her son, Turkish daughter-in-law and grandson, who live in Manhattan. Professor Starr is comfortable in her surroundings, and, as her recent legal actions involving the arbitrary conduct of local zoning officials suggest, she remains more active than the notion of retirement might imply.

Locally, we have to shout out with thankfulness that Professor Starr spent the latter stages of her academic career in Indianapolis. Her willingness to explore the full range of academic experiences, her contextual understanding of law, and her facility for self-reflection and critique enriched the Indiana University School of Law—Indianapolis more than words could ever express. We were incredibly fortunate to have this warm and wonderful woman in our midst, and in the years ahead, we will benefit by recalling what she kindly shared with us.



