It is really difficult to think of one single memory of Bill Landes, with whom I have been close for well over 35 years. But I can report about his phases in life. He has at different times in his life been an art collector, where the breadth, quality, and connoisseurship of his collection has been notable. He has been an avid jazz pianist, until an even greater passion for golf has overtaken his prior love. And of course he and Lisa have been good and trusted friends of Eileen and mine’s since they first arrived in Chicago in 1974. We have homes that are located near each other in Michigan, and have spent more than one pleasant evening sitting on screened porches eating hot dogs and hamburgers right off the grill. The human side matters. The intellectual side speaks for itself.

—Richard Epstein

When I arrived at the University of Chicago Law School almost thirty years ago, Bill Landes stood out unmistakably from the rest of the faculty. First, he was a superbly elegant dresser. Second, his personal style was easy-going and relaxed. At the time the Law School had acquired the image (not entirely unwarranted) of a place of high-strung intellectual intensity.

—Eric Posner
and physical self-denial. Our colleagues were not indigent, of course, but many of them seemed indifferent to, or perhaps above, purely material satisfactions. Not Bill. When I would encounter him it was reassuring to see that someone around these parts knew how to live. We were both runners in those days. When our paths crossed on the lakefront I was always impressed at how swiftly he moved without seeming to make a fuss. Intellectually he was similarly effortless. He made the most trenchant points in an understated way that I found irresistible.

For the students too Bill represented something uniquely different. What they most appreciated, besides his perfect attire, was his way of fostering their intuitions about economics while soothing their anxieties. Without him many fewer would have fathomed the connections between economics and just about everything else.

—Joseph Isenbergh

The letter and memoranda in favor of Bill Landes’s appointment are of course confidential but bits and pieces can surely be revealed. Bill was described as “patient, unegotistical, and not overly excitable.” (A footnote declares: “Landes gave a paper at Hans Zeisel’s workshop two years ago and was baited and taunted in the best tradition of the Zeisel workshop. Landes remained calm throughout, suggesting an unnaturally low threshold of anger.”) Elsewhere there is this: “Landes has a good personality to function effectively in the Law School. He is not an acidulous or aggressive person, characteristics admirable of course in lawyers but resented by them in others, and he is quite open to the views of people in other disciplines. He does not regard legal materials as gibberish or lawyers as fusty obscurantists. Such tolerance is rare in the economics profession.”

My own, first real encounter with Bill Landes was at a law and economics conference where I happened to sit next to him. As each paper or comment was delivered, Bill whispered an opinion on the quality of the argument and the intellect behind it. I had no idea what I had done to merit receiving this gossip (though I later thought it was the first and maybe only clever step in a recruitment process) but I know that it caused me to attend many future conferences, and to think carefully not only about what I said but also about where I sat.

—Saul Levmore

My first impression of Bill was that he was tall, athletic, quiet, nice and really smart. He also was the nicest dressed economist that I had ever met. Not only did his socks match, but his pants, ties, and shirts, all were elegant. I have been learning from Bill ever since I met him. I had the pleasure of writing a paper with Bill (and Dick Posner) early in my career. That paper showed me how serious academic research was done. Bill is happy not only to teach but to give advice. I recall once discussing how he buys new electronic products. He told me whenever he did...
not know the details of the particular products, he would always buy the most expensive. He also told me that expensive golf clubs are worth buying since they can significantly improve your game. I once saw all of Bill’s golf clubs. I think he is trying to get sued for trying to become a monopolist.

—Dennis Carlton

I have had the pleasure of playing a number of rounds of golf through the years with Bill. During some of our more recent outings, Bill had developed the “driver yips,” a term that suggests a psychological block to hitting a driver successfully. He could not hit a driver off a tee, and as with most of us bare ground was not an option either. He devised a solution, which was to construct a small mound out of divots found on the golf course, and to place his ball on the mound in lieu of a tee. Somehow, a ball perched on a mound of decaying turf became hittable. As we walked around the course, Bill would often yell out “There’s a good one!”, referring not to a good shot but to a sizable strip of decaying turf detached from the course by another golfer from which he could build the next tee mound. Eventually he would accumulate these divots in a large zip lock bag so as not to run out in a pinch. To this day, whenever I take a massive divot, I always think of Bill.

—Alan Sykes

Since Bill lives in my building, I’m sure I met him very early on, but I don’t remember exactly when. My first impression was of someone obviously brilliant but extremely modest and self-effacing, and very kind. Early in my time in Chicago, Bill went out of his way to give me tips about carpenters, electricians, etc., and particularly about the East Bank Club.

—Alan Sykes
Bill actually taught me how to use free weights. I love hearing Bill play the piano. He is a very good jazz pianist, and he plays with the sort of relaxed enjoyment of life that I associate with him. He is kind, gentle, and completely lacking in arrogance.

—Martha Nussbaum

I have known Bill for almost 40 years. My first impression of him, which is everybody’s first impression of him, is that he is extremely well dressed and slightly resembles Humphrey Bogart. One’s second impression is that he is an extremely nice person who happens to be a first-rate economist. We have written two books together and 37 articles—a productive collaboration, from which I have learned much. He is also my best friend.

—Richard Posner