

OBITUARY

In Memoriam: John F. Lulves (1940-2005)

E. Victor Milione

JOHN LULVES was a joy to be with from the first time I met him. He exuded warmth and likeableness when he applied for the position of ISI's Midwest Director forty years ago. Later, I would realize that his warmth and likeableness were not an applicant's predictable facade. John was simply being himself.

He told me that he had studied accounting, but the conversation that day quickly evidenced a broadness and a depth of knowledge that convinced me he was not a Johnny-one-note. He showed a familiarity with Keats, Melville, Kirk, Weaver, Newman, the Founding Fathers, as well as with the Bible and the Church Fathers. He was intelligent, and he had faith. We also spoke of contemporary events, but he appeared far more comfortable with scholarly subjects. He seemed out of tune with the academic emphasis, then as now, on the contemporary and the currently relevant. "The truth is," as Jacques Barzun has observed, "that dealing with the contemporary prepares the mind poorly for a thoughtful life, shortening judgment and distorting perspective."

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John's mind was well prepared, and thus he was an excellent choice for ISI. Besides, he had the courage to ask me, "What book begins with the sentence, 'Call me Ishmael.?' " I thought for a moment and replied, "*Moby Dick*." How fortunate I was that he had not chosen any one of a hundred introductory sentences from the many books he had read. And, how fortunate he was that I knew the answer and was therefore not embarrassed by the question. Otherwise, I might have waited a few days to inform him that he had the position. Yet John was neither vain nor pretentious. If I, too, had read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, as I had alleged, he was certain that I would recall the origin of the sentence.

His knowledge of accounting served ISI well as he advanced to National Director and then to Executive Vice President. ISI was never really flush in its formative days. It frequently had too much program for the money, but John was excellent with budgets and he worked miracles with the funds available.

John Lulves was multi-talented and wore many hats at ISI. Foremost among them was as Publisher of *Modern Age*, which became an ISI journal starting with

the Fall 1976 issue. It was a perfect fit. John was a bookman and at home with the aims of *Modern Age* as announced by its founding editor, Russell Kirk, in his inaugural editorial. Kirk wrote that it would be a journal

dedicated to conserving the best elements in our civilization; and those best elements are in peril nowadays.... Our purpose is to stimulate discussion of the great moral and social and political and economic and literary questions of the hour, and to search for means by which the legacy of our civilization may be kept safe.

Clearly, John was well informed in the matrix of values and of institutions which are embodied in that legacy, and he was committed to maintaining its continuity for future generations.

An additional related concern was overseeing the Richard M. Weaver Fellowship program that granted graduate stipends in a wide range of disciplines in an effort to bolster the humanities and a balanced integration of knowledge. Many of the students with whom he came in contact in this program, and other ISI activities, benefited from his strong tendency and a keen ability to mentor and nurture students.

He also possessed an uncanny ability to pick staff and office personnel who would fit well with the philosophical orientation and the mission of ISI. But it was perhaps as a man that he exerted his deepest influence on those around and closest to him. He was interested in their lives, their families, and their children; he was concerned about their health; he asked about their adventures—budding romances, marriages, and births. His life was a continuing demonstration of his

warmth and likeableness. He loved his friends and the ISI family, and they, including myself, loved him in return.

John was a quiet man in spite of his booming voice: he had a commanding presence among all who knew him. He was well-read and discerning, but what was equally important to me was that he was a good man. It became evident over time that reading was not only a delight for him, but also a necessity. It was a necessity precisely because he knew, with Cardinal Newman, that while “other beings are complete from their first existence...man begins with nothing realized, and he has to make capital for himself by the exercise of those faculties which are his natural inheritance. Thus he gradually advances to the fullness of his original destiny.” John knew that it was his destiny to know, to love, and to serve God in this life—and ultimately to be with Him in eternity. It is safe to say that John has achieved his destiny.

We will miss our dear friend, but we take comfort in Seneca’s meditation on the loss of a friend:

The comfort of having a friend may be taken away, but not that of having had one. As there is a sharpness in some fruits and bitterness in some wines that please us, so there is a mixture in the remembrance of a friend where the loss of their company is sweetened again by the contemplation of their virtues. In some respects I have lost what I had, and in others I retain still what I have lost. It is an ill construction of providence to reflect only upon my friend being taken away, without any regard to the benefit of his once being given me.

John Lulves truly will live in our memories.