

**SUZAN SHABNAM DAVIES:  
13 AUGUST 1975 – 23 APRIL 2019**

KATY BARNETT\*

The first thing anyone noticed about Suzan Davies was her extraordinary enthusiasm and drive. I first met Suzan in 1988 in Year 7 at my Australian high school and I was immediately struck by her vivacious personality, intelligence and compassion. Our friendship spanned over thirty years. She made a great contribution to the law as an educator and as an inaugural editor of the *Melbourne Journal of International Law*.

Suzan and I both undertook Arts/Law degrees at Melbourne Law School in the mid-to-late 1990s. As Suzan came to complete her law degree, she and some other Melbourne Law School students, Peter Henley, Kalika Jayasekera, Amanda Rologas and Tracy Whiriskey, noticed the need for an international law publication in our region. They became the inaugural editors of the *Melbourne Journal of International Law*, as they explained in its first edition:

Towards the end of 1999, we became acutely aware of the shortage of academic and practice-oriented material dealing with the region's relationship with both private and public international law. As the new millennium replaced the old, we worked to develop a new publication on international law focusing on the Asia-Pacific region. What was originally conceived as a newsletter grew into a complete journal; and in April 2000, the Law Faculty of the University of Melbourne gave its support to the creation of the *Melbourne Journal of International Law*.<sup>1</sup>

In his Foreword to the first edition, the late Christopher Weeramantry, the Former Vice-President of the International Court of Justice, said (in remarks that proved prescient) that the formation of the *Journal* was 'an important event in the vast and varied field of international law scholarship'.<sup>2</sup> He went on to note:

A university journal carries the best and most original thinking of the younger generation, who will in their time be shaping the contours of international law to meet the needs of the new century. Especially in our time, when so many new departments of international law are being moulded and so many traditional departments are being reshaped — environmental law, space law, the handling of non-state actors, the evolution of socially oriented concepts such as rights and duties *erga omnes* and inter-generational rights — these voices are invaluable.<sup>3</sup>

The *Melbourne Journal of International Law* represents a lasting and valuable contribution to the legal academic world, to Australia, and to Melbourne Law School. This year the *Journal* celebrates the publication of its 20<sup>th</sup> volume.

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\* BA/LLB (Hons), PhD (Melbourne); Professor, Melbourne Law School, The University of Melbourne.

<sup>1</sup> Suzan Davies et al, 'From the Editors' (2000) 1(1) *Melbourne Journal of International Law* i, i.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher G Weeramantry, 'Foreword' (2000) 1(1) *Melbourne Journal of International Law* iii, iii.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Suzan's career was not confined to this, however. She also undertook a Master's degree in International Law at the London School of Economics, completed her articles at Russell Kennedy in Melbourne, worked at the United Nations in the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs, and was associate to the late Justice Peter Hely of the Federal Court of Australia. Later, she became a much-loved teacher at Fintona Girls' School and then Camberwell Grammar School, where she taught subjects including history, commerce and legal studies. Her students were lucky to have exposure to such an amazing depth of experience and passion.

Suzan's passion for international law and justice was born from her childhood experiences. She was born on 13 August 1975 in Tehran, Iran, the eldest child of Mahineh and Nouri Aftasi, into a loving and progressive family. Reflecting the views of her parents, Suzan and her brothers — Sam and Cyrus — were raised to be tolerant, open-minded and supportive of the rights of all in society. In 1983, when she was seven years old, her family fled Iran's theocratic regime and emigrated to Australia. Suzan learned to speak English at the local state primary school. Her father chose Australia after his experience of studying in the United States convinced him that Australia would be a safer place in which to raise his children. I can speak from experience to say that Suzan's parents are welcoming to all. Suzan also embodied this warmth and openness, with my children being as welcome at her house as I was at her parent's house.

Suzan's teenage years saw her shuttling back and forth between England and Australia. (In a strange synchronicity, I also spent half of my teenage years in England.) In 1990, she attended the British School in the Netherlands, where, among other things, she won a public speaking trophy which was almost as large as her, reflecting her extraordinary ability to speak and persuade. It was also there that she met her future husband, Paul Davies. Tall, quiet and red-headed, Paul is Suzan's opposite in many ways, but they made a perfect couple. They were blessed by the arrival of their twins, Yasmin and Dylan.

Suzan's accomplishments were all the more amazing because of the health problems she suffered throughout her life. When we were 15, Suzan was diagnosed with stage four Hodgkin's lymphoma and only given weeks to live. She underwent aggressive treatment and survived. It recurred again in her 20s, but once Suzan had recovered, she married Paul in London. Unfortunately, Suzan then developed breast cancer as a result of previous treatment for the Hodgkin's lymphoma. She faced treatment with the same bravery she had faced it before. The breast cancer metastasised in 2011, but she persevered for the sake of her family and her students, and it is testimony to her astounding strength and positivity that she lived for seven years after this. She was determined to make it to her twins' 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, and achieved that goal. She spent the remaining few weeks of her life at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, where every effort was made to keep her comfortable.

Suzan was an amazing human being whose passion for the law, learning and justice shone from her. We are all the richer for her contributions to legal learning and knowledge. She is survived by her husband Paul, her children Yasmin and Dylan, her parents, Mahineh and Nouri and her brothers Sam and Cyrus and their families.