

ASIL HUDSON MEDAL CONVERSATION “SONGS MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME: A VERY PERSONAL ACCOUNT” A CONVERSATION WITH LORI FISLER DAMROSCH

This conversation was convened at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 7, 2022. The Honoree was Lori Fisler Damrosch of Columbia Law School, the 2022 Manley O. Hudson Medal recipient. The Discussant was José Alvarez of NYU School of Law.

President Catherine Amirfar opened the event by welcoming participants to the Hudson Medal conversation and thanking ASIL Law Firm Partner Allen & Overy for its sponsorship of the 2022 Hudson Medal luncheon. She then gave the floor to Patrick Pearsall, partner at Allen & Overy, for introductions of the Hudson Medal Honoree, Lori Fisler Damrosch, and her interviewer, José E. Alvarez.

Patrick Pearsall noted that he had known Lori Damrosch going back to when he had been a student at Columbia Law School, where she is the Hamilton Fish Professor of International Law and Diplomacy. Later they had worked together as colleagues, especially in connection with preparing an amicus brief for the U.S. Supreme Court on an issue involving immunities of international organizations under U.S. and international law. He then introduced José Alvarez, Herbert and Rose Rubin Professor of International Law at NYU Law School, for their interview.

REMARKS BY JOSÉ ALVAREZ

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The Hudson Medal is given for “outstanding contributions to scholarship and achievement in international law.” For many of us, Lori is the personification of the American Society of International Law. The essential elements of her biography are deceptively simple. She grew up in California, entered Yale College in the fall of 1970, in only the second year of coeducation there, where she majored in Russian and East European studies—streaking through the place in only three years and graduating *summa cum laude*. She received her JD three years later from Yale Law School and stayed in New Haven to clerk for Judge Jon O. Newman. She served as an attorney-adviser in the U.S. Department of State from September of 1977 through January of 1981 and then worked at Sullivan & Cromwell through 1984. She has been at Columbia Law School ever since.

These essentials fail to describe the Renaissance Woman before you. She is that rare individual who manages, at a time of specialization, to be a true generalist in public international law, who is also a worthy successor to her Columbia mentors. Like Louis Henkin, she is the leading scholar of her generation in U.S. foreign relations law. My students know her as the co-author of the leading casebook in international law—the “Columbia book,” formerly co-edited with Henkin and Oscar Schachter—but they probably do not know of six books and more in the making, ninety-five articles, book chapters, reviews, and published lectures, or that she speaks or is able to work in some five languages, and that she is a member of the *Institut de Droit International*. She has lectured virtually everywhere—the Max Planck Institute in Heidelberg, the Seoul and Xiamen

Academies of International law, the European University Institute, the Constitutional Court of Georgia, Qatar University, among other venues where the invisible college gathers.

Even some of those who are in this room may not be aware that Lori holds the international law equivalent of the sports world's GAAT ("greatest athlete of all time") award, or if you prefer, the arts' EGOT (a holder of an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony). Lori is the only person I know who has ASIL's GAAT or EGOT. She outshines all prior Hudson Medal winners as the only person who has been awarded the Deák Prize (for best article in the *American Journal of International Law* written by a young author) and ASIL's certificate of merit for creative scholarship, and has been elected co-editor in chief of *AJIL* and ASIL's president.

[The conversational write-up that follows has questions from José Alvarez in italics and answers by Lori Damrosch in regular font.]

Where does the story begin? What was your earliest encouragement in the direction of international law?

REMARKS BY LORI FISLER DAMROSCH

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First, I am deeply appreciative of this honor, especially in the presence of so many who encouraged me along the way. I would like to acknowledge previous Hudson honorees who are present, including Charlie Brower, Edie Brown Weiss, and Bernie Oxman. Thanks to Catherine, Patrick, and the Allen & Overy law firm for sponsoring this event.

I also want to acknowledge my debts to other Hudson medalists who reached out to me early in my career—when I was, say, a twenty-five-year-old lawyer just getting started in the State Department, and that person was, say, a deputy legal adviser or an *AJIL* editor in chief. I am sure we will cover several of them in the course of this interview.

But the story really begins before I was born. In light of the annual meeting theme of "Personalizing International Law," I have thought that the best title for my remarks would be "Songs My Mother Taught Me: A Very Personal Account." The most personal way I can tell the story is to begin with the "prenatal" influence, especially my mother's studies and experiences before I was born.

Many in this room knew my mother, Jean Bauer Fidler, who attended roughly twenty-five annual meetings of this Society as a retired lawyer. She was a proud graduate of UCLA Law School's founding class, the class of 1952, and also of UCLA's college class of 1945. She passed away last year and is undoubtedly beaming her bright smile on this gathering—not just here at the Hudson lunch, but also in another room in this hotel, where UCLA Law School is also hosting a lunch today.

My mother gave the valedictory address to her UCLA undergraduate class on June 24, 1945, just two days before the San Francisco Conference would complete its work and open the Charter of the United Nations for signature. Her graduation speech pointed to the high hopes of her generation for the new UN organization, to establish the foundations for a secure peace, and to build peace through education. She could not have imagined in 1945, but it turned out to be the case just two years later, that she would soon be employed by the UN at its Geneva office.

In 1947, Jean and her friend Judy bought one-way tickets to Europe in search of adventure and found their way to Geneva, where the newly established UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was hiring. They applied, and starting from September 1947 and for the next fifteen months, Jean and Judy were among the earliest UN civil servants at the Geneva office, reporting to Gunnar