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# Kluwer Arbitration Blog

## In Memoriam Pieter Sanders

Judith Freedberg (University of Miami School of Law ) · Monday, October 8th, 2012

*Sometimes you have to listen to your husband, especially when he is endowed with intuition, and you tend to rely on reason. He said, "Go as soon as it is ready". Thank goodness, I did.*

For months Rosabel Goodman-Everard and I had been soliciting and collecting letters from friends of Pieter Sanders which would be collected in a book and presented to him for his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Letters had flowed in from all over the world. Some were accompanied by vintage photos of moments with Piet at the speaker's podium or on the dance floor.

Rosabel and I had worked with, and been friends of Piet for decades, We were co-conspirators along with Albert Jan van den Berg and Jan Schultsz 30 years ago in editing *The Art of Arbitration*, the liber amicorum presented to him on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. So it was quite natural that we would turn to each other for this project. And what a joy it was, reading through the recollections shared by so many friends of Piet's remarkable contributions to the world of arbitration and of his visionary art collection.

Piet's motto was to always look to the future. This is noted in letters contributed by "Kluwer friends" Fred Raming, Marcel Nieuwenhuis and Gwen de Vries recounting how Piet started and expanded Kluwer's arbitration list. When the first *ICCA Yearbook Commercial Arbitration* was published in 1976, none of us imagined that the future would include [www.kluwerarbitration.com](http://www.kluwerarbitration.com). But Piet understood disseminating information about international arbitration was essential to its future.

We were touched by letters written by friends, who as young men embarking on writing a doctoral dissertation, had been received by Piet at his home in Schiedam where he also had his office. They wrote of how appreciative they were of his genuine interest in their endeavors, the help and encouragement that he offered and the warmth of his hospitality. Unbeknownst to each other, they all wrote that these memorable visits inspired them and served as a model for how they treat young aspiring students and professionals. It is a gift that continues being passed on, and I hope that it will be perpetuated in the lives of generations of future young scholars.

As Piet's birthday approached and many projects were revealed, Rosabel and I decided that we would tell Piet about our plan well ahead of time, so that he would have a couple of months of pleasant anticipation. He responded with delight at the prospect, particularly since we planned to deliver the book in person. This would involve a trip from Miami, Florida, for me and Washington, D.C. for Rosabel. We were looking for a suitable date that would allow us to make the trip

together. The rational plan would be to wait until October. I could combine the trip with a week spent in Vienna at UNCITRAL Working Group II on Arbitration. Rosabel could complete the work on her latest art exhibition and she and her husband Ron Goodman would have finished the purchase of a new house and the sale of their old one. We consulted with Piet's family who assured us he was doing well and there was no need to rush.

It had been more than a year since I had last visited Piet. I had worked in close collaboration with him on the ICCA publications for decades. My husband and I had relocated to Miami and our visits to The Netherlands were not that frequent. I assumed that each visit would be the last. Each time, my parting words were "Take good care of yourself; I want to celebrate your 100<sup>th</sup> birthday." As "what if" loomed and my husband reminded me over and over how bad I would feel if I were too late, I decided that as soon as the book, *Piet Sanders 100* was printed, I would fly to The Netherlands and deliver it. It was impossible for Rosabel to get away at that time, so I flew solo.

I visited with Piet on 17 September, a few days before his birthday on the 21<sup>st</sup>. He looked well and healthy, especially for a centenarian. I read him a message from Rosabel regretting that she could not be there at the same time. He was delighted with the book and leafed through it immediately (see photo below).



His only reservation was that he would be obliged to thank everyone individually! As this will no longer be possible, on his behalf, I send his thanks to all his friends who contributed.

As I later heard from his secretary and several people who visited with him in the few days that followed, he showed the book to every visitor. Less than a week after his birthday, he died peacefully in his sleep. He slipped out of this world as elegantly as he passed through it.

*Sometimes, you have to listen to your husband.*

*Judy Freedberg, Director of International Arbitration Professional Programs, University of Miami School of Law [www.law.miami.edu](http://www.law.miami.edu)*

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