

PROFILE OF NEW PERIMETER BOARD MEMBER:

# MARK ELLIS



Mark Ellis never knew he could make a living out of his interest in international issues. Even as he started his legal career as a commercial lawyer in Tallahassee, Florida, that his future would evolve as it has: into a life's work in international private and public law.

Born in Washington, DC, and raised in Fairfax, Virginia, Mark developed an interest in the law while watching his father in court. His interest in rule of law, human rights, and international issues developed while participating in summer study programs in Yugoslavia and Brussels, Belgium, as an undergraduate. After graduating from Florida State University with both his undergraduate and law degrees, Mark worked in a Tallahassee law firm and still received the school's student newspaper. An advertisement for applications to the Fulbright Scholars Program caught Mark's eye. "I knew immediately that I wanted to apply, even though I did not think I would be awarded the scholarship. I noticed the ratio of applications to available slots in Yugoslavia were in my favor. Having spent time there, I thought that would be a good place to apply." In the 1980s, the Fulbright program was flexible and Mark extended his one-year fellowship to study economics and trade between the European Union and Yugoslavia into two and one-half years. "My time overseas was the most significant change in my professional life."

### CREATING THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN LAW INITIATIVE

When he returned to the US in 1988, Mark knew he needed to move to Washington, DC, to pursue his international interests. He began working at a boutique international trade firm and writing about foreign investment, and then to work on projects with the World Bank. His shift to rule of law developed out of a confluence of events. The president-elect of the American Bar Association, Talbot ("Sandy") D'Alemberte, had been appointed dean of FSU College of Law after Mark graduated and had looked up Mark while visiting Yugoslavia. Their friendship continued and he included Mark in conversations with the president-elect of the ABA's International Section, Homer Moyer, about creating a program to bring the talent of US attorneys to emerging democracies. In 1989, after the Berlin Wall fell, they created the Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (CEELI), and asked Mark to serve as director. Although he joined CEELI with the intention of soon returning to international trade, Mark found the transition from commercial law to rule of law

and human rights consistent with his childhood interests. "I think I was destined to move in that direction," he says.

CEELI advances the rule of law by supporting the legal reform process in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. CEELI makes American and European legal expertise and technical assistance available to emerging democracies as they modify and restructure their laws and legal systems. "After a few months, I realized that this was a once in a lifetime experience, and I stayed," he says. "It was a magical time with the changes in Eastern Europe. I saw historic transformation as a first-hand witness. It was a humbling time to work with people who had suffered for years and now were trying to make something new and historic. I was honored to be part of it in even a small way."

Mark nurtured and grew CEELI from its founding through its first decade. By the time he left, over 5,000 attorneys and judges had participated, many of whom spent six months or a year overseas. "That experience showed me how impressive the legal profession can be with its pro bono commitment," he adds.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF MARK'S CAREER:

- Executive Director, International Bar Association
- On-air legal analyst for CNN International on the Saddam Hussein trial
- Executive Director, Central and East European Law Initiative, a program of the American Bar Association
- President, Coalition for International Justice, which provides technical legal assistance to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
- Legal Advisor, Independent International Commission on Kosovo (chaired by Justice Richard J. Goldstone)
- Consultant to the Foreign Investment Advisory Service of the World Bank
- Adjunct Professor, Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law
- Fulbright Scholar, Institute of Economics, Zagreb, Croatia (twice)

## INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION

Mark sought a new challenge and in 2000 accepted the post of Executive Director of the International Bar Association (IBA), based in London. “It has been a wonderful journey with the IBA because it plays a unique role in the international community by bringing together almost every country’s national bar association, making it the UN of the legal community.”

Through his work with the IBA, Mark has observed the increased involvement of attorneys from all practice areas. In particular, Mark has observed how business lawyers have committed to supporting the development of laws to advocate for and support human rights. “Unfortunately, we live in a world where we continue to fall short of reaching the accepted standards in rule of law and human rights. However, lawyers can play a crucial role in helping meet these standards. When I was in law school, you would be hard pressed to find classes on human rights, rule of law, or even international law outside the top-tiered schools. Today, these classes

are common. This development has occurred within a relatively short period of time.”

## SERVING ON THE NEW PERIMETER ADVISORY BOARD

Sheldon Krantz was one of CEELI’s early volunteers, providing criminal law assistance in the former Czechoslovakia. Mark recalls, “He was a very successful attorney and could have focused all his time on his business practice. But he found significant time for pro bono work with CEELI.” Mark accepted Sheldon’s request that he serve on the Advisory Board of New Perimeter without knowing much about the program because he knew of Sheldon’s commitment. He has been thoroughly impressed that DLA Piper

has committed its full resources to New Perimeter projects including its media, marketing, and technology departments, as well as its lawyers and other personnel. “New Perimeter is a model that has been seen by many people as the most unique in this area and the most desirable; it will not surprise me to see other firms copying it. I think this will be one of the most important legacies of DLA Piper.”

Mark’s work with CEELI and the IBA has provided the opportunity to be involved in major developments in international law. For example, the IBA trained the prosecutors and judges of the Iraqi Special Tribunal in preparation for the trial of Saddam Hussein and his associates, and Mark served as an on-air commentator about the trial for CNN International.

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