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It is with distress and frustration that I cannot be with you tonight for I have a long-standing commitment in another city. It was impossible to change the date. But, I cannot let this occasion pass without rambling on, as is my habit, about Ken.

First, it was Jessica, then Afsaneh, and now Ken. My children, if you will, have now all left – each learning from each other – each laying the foundation for future decades. What an imprint: integrity, wisdom, style, and a commitment to public service. Ken, whom we honor tonight, has had a career devoted almost exclusively to public service – first at the SEC, then at the World Bank. Others, I am sure, will catalogue his inventions and initiatives: the Global Bond, the need for training of the developing world in the arcane world of finance, the encouragement of sovereign wealth funds, and his superb leadership skills.

For me, I toast Ken for his development of a staff of committed, ethical colleagues and his insistence on hearing diverse views. Unfortunately, the reality is that Ken, like virtually all of us, will not likely be remembered for all those accomplishments, by name, in a 100 years. That honor, to be remembered by name, usually goes to those who compose music or write novels or run for public office. No, his immortality will come from something just as vital and important. It will come from what he has accomplished. The fact is Ken presided over the affairs of an institution right in the middle of financial globalization. He explained it, nurtured it, encouraged it, developed it, and permitted the World Bank to be a leading force in its vitality. It was Ken more than anyone who facilitated the transfer of resources first from the rich to the poor and back again from the poor to the rich. (Actually, thanks to Ken many were no longer poor.) The truth is, it was Ken who created instruments which linked together savers, borrowers, investors and consumers. He was for decades the World's indispensable middle man.

I have always looked at my own early involvement in the process as slight, perhaps best represented by a short poem by Robert Herrick:

“She by the river sat, and sitting there,
She wept, and made it deeper by a tear.”

Ken made that tear a rushing waterfall.

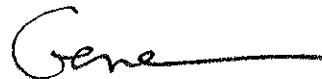
Ken, though he may not know it, was guided in his efforts by the words of Robert Kennedy:

“Think how our world would look to a visitor from another planet as he crossed the continents. He would find great cities and knowledge able to create enormous abundance from the materials of nature. He would witness exploration into understanding of the entire physical universe, from the particles of the atom to the secrets of life. He would see billions of people, separated by only a few hours of flight, communicating with the speed of light, sharing a common dependence on a thin layer of soil and a covering of air. He would also observe that most of mankind was living in misery and hunger, that some of the inhabitants of this tiny, crowded globe were killing others, that a few patches of land were pointing huge instruments of death and war at others. Since what he was seeing proved our intelligence, he would only wonder at our sanity. It is this monstrous absurdity that must be the target of the modern revolution.”

Let me conclude by referring, as I did on the occasion of my leaving the World Bank some 23 years ago, to a poem by the English poet, Robert Bridges:

“I will not let thee go.
I hold thee by too many bands:
Thou sayest farewell, and lo!
I have thee by the hands,
And will not let thee go.”

That is how I feel about Ken.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gene" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Gene Rotberg