

Translation of an article from the Danish daily newspaper Politiken, 30 October 2004

60 years old tomorrow

Steen Lassen is an attorney of the old school. He might not agree with my characterisation, but it is accurate nonetheless.

By 'old school' I mean that he is credible, thorough and honourable to the core. Educated, cultivated and well read, and with his own law firm and his name on the door.

He was born into the law – his family have been lawyers since the 1600s. That's not something he brings up readily in conversation, nor is his success generally.

He would rather talk about Robert Musil's book *The Man Without Qualities* or Thomas Mann's novels or one of the other great German authors he admires. Or about the architectural details of the baroque mansion that was once a hospital and now houses his office and the dozen lawyers within.

There has been no shortage of professional victories since he earned his degree in 1971 with top marks. After training as an assistant attorney with Supreme Court Attorney Reumert, like other ambitious lawyers, Steen Lassen looked to the other side of the Atlantic. He started at Harvard Law School, where he earned an LLM degree. He continued by joining the classic New York law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell on Wall Street. Then he returned to Copenhagen to found, along with his friend and colleague Lennart Ricard, the firm that bears their names and frames their working lives.

As the corporate attorney for Danish Radio, he has made copyright law and freedom of expression a core service area. And just about all the other European public service broadcasting stations have confidently asked him to fight for their rights in an increasingly commercial world.

Many others have also recognised Lassen's professionalism and supreme integrity.

For example, the Prime Minister's Office appointed Steen Lassen as the legal adviser to the prime minister in the recently established tax allowance investigation commission. The Minister of Finance appointed him as a member of the expert group to investigate the Danish Financial Supervisory Authority's role in major financial scandals at the beginning of the 1990s involving the Hafnia and Baltica insurance companies, among others. The management of the TV2 television station have hired him as counsel for their impending privatisation. His colleagues acknowledged him with an honorary award in 2000.

Cicero's *De Officiis (On Duties)* is Steen Lassen's Bible, but fortunately, he has also had time for other things. Extensive travels in his youth, such as a three-month long hitchhiking trip from Istanbul to Afghanistan to Japan. Time to study Sanskrit at an Indian university 500 km north of Calcutta. Time for classical music, literature and art. Time to forge friendships with people around the world from New York attorney and social critic Philip Howard to the Minister of Technology in India, Kapil Sibal. Steen Lassen is also the chairman of Fanø Golf Links, established by his grandfather in 1901.

And naturally, he also has time for his German-born wife Gabriele and their two grown-up children (globetrotters like their father).

Not to mention bees, roses, chickens, a dog and much more.