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Thomas G. S. Christensen

Theodore J. St. Antoine

University of Michigan Law School, tstanton@umich.edu

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THOMAS G.S. CHRISTENSEN

speaker, and representative of all of the best attributes of labor practitioners in this country. In addition, particularly for me, Tom was a great teacher and friend. He is the reason I became a labor lawyer, and he remains an inspiration to me to this day. For me, there never was, nor will there ever be, another Tom Christensen.

THEODORE J. ST. ANTOINE

James E. and Sarah A. Degan Professor of Law, University of Michigan

Exactly twenty years ago, I had the privilege of introducing Tom Christensen at the annual meeting of the ABA’s Labor Relations Law Section. I had not known Tom well for any length of time (I still feel hesitant about calling him “Chris”), but we shared similar backgrounds, and there had been and would continue to be numerous intersections in our careers. We both were kids from the hinterlands (Tom from Iowa, and I from Vermont) who had succumbed to the bright lights of the east coast. Tom had also published my very first article as a rookie law teacher.

In any event, I duly informed that audience in August 1973 about Tom’s midwestern origins, his eastward hegira, and his forthcoming ascent to the prestigious post of Secretary of the Labor Section. Then I concluded:

And now let me save the best about Tom until last. Tom is married to a labor lawyer who is every whit as smart as he is, who has just recently presented him with a brand new baby and, if it were not out of keeping with the fashion of the times, I would add, is even better looking than Tom.

Tom could not have been quicker on the uptake. Said he:

That glowing introduction is exceeded only by some comments which I received in a letter the other day. The comment there was that I had the finest legal mind in the nation and was followed by a request by my oldest son for an increase in his allowance.

Tom proceeded to one of his typically deft, wise, and practical legal analyses, here concerning the National Labor Relations Board’s then-new Collyer doctrine of deferral to contract arbitration. It was also (perhaps most typical of all) so modestly understated that one had to listen hard to catch Tom’s cautionary message: the Board should be wary about too hastily finding a waiver of important statutory rights, especially since an arbitrator’s decision ordinarily is subject only to limited review.

As my introduction of Tom might indicate, I have always thought of him and his wife Andrea as a team. They made a strikingly handsome and elegant couple in any setting. Beyond that, they made an outstanding pair of co-authors when they combined their formidable writing tal-
ents. This they did in two provocative (not to mention witty) articles on that subtle and elusive subject, the role of intent in unfair labor practice cases.\(^5\)

Andrea actually has the star turn in one of my favorite anecdotes involving Tom. A dozen or so years ago, Tom and I were both baseball salary arbitrators. For a heady twenty-four-hour period I held the record for awarding a player the highest annual salary in a last-best-offer arbitration (it was less than half a million dollars, to show how times have changed). Then Tom telephoned to report gleefully that he had topped me in an award to the great relief pitcher, Bruce Sutter (Tom’s figure was still well under a million). “But the best part of the story, Ted,” Tom chortled, “is what happened to Andrea.” Tom then regaled me with this story: the morning after his award, Andrea was in a hurry to get to Philadelphia to argue a case there and forgot to take along her *New York Times*. On the train going down, a man stood up and announced to the world: “Do you know what some [expletive deleted] idiot of an arbitrator has done? He’s given almost a million bucks to a relief pitcher!” When this protester had finished with his *Times* and set it aside, Andrea tapped him on the shoulder and asked if she could borrow the sports section. One can imagine the look of delight on his face when he saw Andrea. “Of course, ma’am,” he said eagerly. “And are you a sports fan, too?” “No,” responded Andrea (frostily, I’m sure), “I’m the wife of that ‘idiot’ of an arbitrator, and I just want to see what the *Times* has to say about him . . . .”

There are so many lovely memories of times when my wife Lloyd and I got together with the Christensens, or when our paths crossed accidentally. The venues reflected the catholicity of the Christensens’ tastes. I remember admiring, even envying, Tom’s trim smartness at a New Year’s Eve black-tie gala performance of “The Daughter of the Regiment” at the Metropolitan Opera, with Luciano Pavarotti and Joan Sutherland. I remember a long, cozy, convivial evening of good food, good drink, and above all, good talk at that uniquely stylish restaurant, the Café des Artistes off Central Park West. I also recall with some amusement a laid-back, unbuttoned dinner conversation with Tom when he was a visiting professor at Michigan. We nearly convinced each other that the two of us should change places, with him coming to Ann Arbor and me going to the Big Apple. I told him it showed that for all his chic, he was really more the farm boy, after all.

In some ways, however, the fondest and most significant recollections are of late-night gatherings in recent years at the annual meetings of the ABA and the National Academy of Arbitrators. Tom was having increasing trouble with his legs, and I suspect that he was often in pain. But there were never any complaints. The wit was a little drier and more biting, the humor a trifle darker; that was all. Tom kept the spotlight on others, not himself. For me, he remains a figure of quiet gallantry, a serious and sensitive, yet fun-loving colleague—truly a man for all occasions.

JUDITH P. VLADÈCK
Partner, Vladeck, Waldman, Elias & Englehard in New York City

Scholar, teacher, skillful mediator and arbitrator—there are so many labels that one could apply in describing Chris. They would all be accurate and yet miss the essence of the man.

One cannot portray Chris fairly without recognizing the two characteristics that defined him, and would have done so, regardless of the profession he chose to follow: he was a gentleman, and he was a patrician. While those words are often misused, they should be understood to convey what, sadly, is less and less the model in our society.

As a gentleman, Chris could be relied on, without question, to behave honorably and with integrity. Disagree with him—of course. Question his honor—never. As a gentleman, Chris could be charming and witty. But the charm and wit were never at the expense of others; there was no malice or meanness. No man or woman was denied his interest, attention, or courtesy by reason of his or her education, position, or economic or social class. Whether Chris was in the company of blue collar workers, CEOs, or middle managers, he was unfailingly respectful of their opinions, and of them as people—not noblesse oblige, but a genuine respect for the dignity of each individual.

Patrician—perhaps each of us has an image that word evokes. To me, it describes a person with a natural elegance or, as the dictionary defines it, a person of breeding and cultivation. Chris had that elegance and a deep appreciation of all manner of things.

The description that I have offered should not in any way suggest a one-dimensional, less than human person. I loved Chris for his warmth and humor. I disagreed with him many times, and deplored his errors when he found against my clients. Nonetheless, my respect for his approach to the process of arbitration of disputes was unlimited.

He did not encourage the scorched earth tactics of dispute resolution that seem to have become the modern style. Even the most strongly held differences of views were, as he approached them, capable of being