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Kevin E. Kennedy

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KEVIN E. KENNEDY

*Elizabeth S. Ferguson**

Kevin and I shared the most intense one and a half years either of us had ever experienced. During that time I learned as much from working with Kevin as I did from working on the *Law Review*. When we began our tenure on the editorial board, we had spoken to each other twice. For the first few weeks we felt incredibly uncomfortable around one another. Finally, the situation became unbearable and we confronted one another over dinner (the *Review* paid) at a Chinese restaurant (Kevin loved Chinese food). Kevin told me how he felt about me (a repressed, inhibited midwesterner) and that he wanted us to be friends. He elaborated on the qualities he had seen in me that he thought would allow us to work well together and that he admired. He was remarkably honest about his emotions and opinions. Before dinner ended, he cried. Afterwards, Kevin launched into his rendition of a long, very off-color joke. It broke the tension and struck exactly the right tone. For the walk back to the law school, we exchanged anecdotes and talked for the first time without constraint. That evening was the beginning of our friendship. It provided my first inside glimpse of Kevin's sensitivity, his volatility, his mental agility, and his special brand of humor.

Because Kevin was sensitive and attuned to how others felt, he could, and would, torture himself by worrying about the feelings of slight acquaintances. When the *Law Review* held an open house for the first-year students, Kevin anguished over how tense they seemed. He spent the rest of the evening talking about those students with whom he had spoken: their names, what they had said to him, how badly each wanted to be on the *Review*. He worried in particular about two very close friends, one of whom had divulged her first semester grades and confided that she was worried that if her friend made the *Review* and she did not, they would spend no time together and it would ruin their friendship. Kevin spent days fretting about it. Three months later, when the new staff had been chosen and our business manager had sent us a list of names, Kevin immediately checked to see if both women had made the *Review*. That type of concern and caring was typical of Kevin.

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Kevin told me he had AIDS soon after we became close friends. His behavior after he told me, perhaps more than any other example, illustrates Kevin's special and unique qualities. He put aside his feelings and helped me to deal with my pain and anger. He gave me courage and prepared me to face his death. We discussed why he continued in law school, why he had run for EIC, and how I would react if I had been in his place. He dealt with his own mortality without being maudlin or self-pitying. His strength of character would allow nothing less.

Kevin felt everything intensely, not just his concern for others. Kevin would be ecstatic, not just happy. He would be furious, not just angry. If he liked you, he adored you. He felt each slight and each compliment as though it were the only one he had ever received. This intensity was part and parcel of his need to do nothing by half measures; he was a perfectionist. His desire for perfection drove him and when he failed to live up to his impossibly high standards, it caused him great personal despair. The intensity with which Kevin felt everything translated into an absorption with the *Review*. He felt the responsibility and pressure of putting out a review and he put his personal wishes to the side. He neglected his school work and his health trying to ensure that he made each issue of the *Review* the best that he could. His grades suffered because he could not put his own work ahead of that of the *Review*. Because he expended so much energy on the *Review*, he never finished his Note, a failure he felt keenly.

Because Kevin was so quick, he appeared even more intense. He assimilated and processed information so rapidly that he often appeared impatient. An articles editor, when describing a typical articles meeting, remarked that Kevin always made insightful comments about the articles; he seemed to have an exceptional clarity — a brilliance — that made him different. His intellectual curiosity ensured that he loved reading and discussing articles. Every day when the mail arrived, he would prop his feet upon his desk and peruse the new submissions. Invariably, one would catch his interest and he would stick his head in my door to discuss it. He showed his prowess in class, where he found connections and drew conclusions that everyone else missed. He was not one of those law students who stated the obvious to the rest of the class. Instead he spoke only when he could truly advance the discussion, which happened often.

His written communications also illustrated his mental agility; he was a beautiful and eloquent writer. Even mundane letters took on added depth when Kevin wrote them. His humor, compassion, and brilliance leapt out at the reader with every sentence. In fact, at times

like this, I feel the loss of Kevin most sharply. If Kevin were writing this, he would have found the perfect anecdotes to illustrate all the characteristics he felt were important. If he were writing this, his compassion, warmth, and affection would be almost tangible. The reader would have a complete picture of a whole person, not just fragments of a complex personality.

Few people accomplish in a long lifetime what Kevin accomplished in his short one. I have not touched on so many important facets of Kevin's personality: his relationship with his family, his many close friends, his involvement in the gay/lesbian society, his commitment to public interest law, his Chinese studies, and his membership in clubs, to name just a few. I have also not discussed many of his important accomplishments; he won the moot court contest his second year, and he received several awards in both his second and a third years. Instead, I have focused his efforts on the *Law Review*. In some respects, this is appropriate. Kevin viewed the *Review* as an enduring accomplishment he would leave behind; he saw it as his attempt to influence the law. Each issue shows Kevin's direction. Each article benefited from Kevin's edit. His attempt culminated in the symposium on legal storytelling which shows Kevin's unique vision of the law.

I have also focused on Kevin's law review experience because I find it impossible to capture the complexity of Kevin's personality. I cannot begin to describe how Kevin, by just being himself, changed everyone whom he befriended. I know I am a different person for having been the recipient of Kevin's affection and encouragement. For those of us who knew and loved him, he continues to influence our behavior. At least once a day I think "wouldn't Kevin think this was stupid," or "Kevin would be laughing at me right now." This, of course, is Kevin's greatest accomplishment. More important than his brilliant scholarship or his many achievements, Kevin has left many close friends scattered around the country. His death has left a gaping hole in their lives.