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William W. Bishop, Jr.

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WILLIAM W. BISHOP, JR.

*Thomas E. Kauper**

I first came to know Bill Bishop thirty-nine years ago. I was his paper boy. In the intervening years I knew him as a professional colleague of my father's, a warm family friend, my own professor and, ultimately, my own professional colleague. There are lots of personal memories over those years: the picture of Bill and my father striding off to work together — two large, not terribly coordinated academics deep in conversation, maintaining a pace with which no one could keep up; Bill in his regular seat at concerts, which he never seemed to miss, or in his seat at the Michigan Stadium, intent upon the game which he loved and understood so well; the high-topped shoes which were his hallmark and always seemed to give him an aura of the late nineteenth century; the contrast in conversation between Bill's deliberate, well-paced style and his wife Mary's rapid, staccato manner of speaking.

Through all of these memories, however, run certain themes that were readily apparent even to that very young paper boy. Paper boys knew a lot about their customers in those days. And how people deal with those — like paper boys — who perform relatively menial services for them says a great deal about them. Bill was more than courteous. Both he and Mary were genuinely interested in what I did. They took time to pursue that interest. There was more than one cold, wet, windy day when I was taken in for a few minutes to warm up. Collection days often brought lengthy conversations (lengthy in part, I admit, because neither Bill nor Mary could ever find the card I was required to punch, a fact which would not surprise anyone who was ever in Bill's office). From those days I carried an impression of a man whose size and verbal style could easily intimidate but who did not, a man with an air of courtliness who was truly gentle in nature and, most of all, a man who cared about and was interested in people, and particularly young people, not in the abstract as many academics profess to be, but on an individual, personal basis. My early impressions were correct. This was a gentle, caring man, whose academic and intellectual attainments might have brought with them an aloofness and arrogance, but never did. Bill was also a man who enjoyed what life

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had to offer, and whose interests spanned a wide spectrum: football, music, the outdoors and all of its creatures.

Over the many years he taught here, Bill instructed literally thousands of students. I was one of those thousands, having had *Professor* Bishop for both Admiralty and International Law. Everybody took International Law, not out of any love for the subject or sense of its importance (it was on no bar exam that I know of), and not even because of his towering reputation in the field, but rather because students simply wanted to take a course from Professor Bishop. His gentleness with and interest in students was legendary. His International Law course was large, but over the semester he came to know everybody, most of whom he seemed to remember forever. But without denigrating International Law, I confess that I preferred Admiralty (to the point that I actually interviewed a number of admiralty firms). Professor Bishop's enthusiasm for the subject was contagious. He seemed to know everything, from the most arcane procedural point to the architectural details of a Liberty ship. To the rest of us, venturing as you will into unknown waters, it was an experience to remember. Almost all of us do, I am sure.

Bill Bishop brought to his classes everything a teacher should: knowledge, preparation, enthusiasm, humor and, most important, the willingness and patience to listen. But he brought and conveyed something else. Bill had values, a belief that there were things that were right and things that were wrong. He was not a relativist. And he believed that people generally sought to do the right thing. In this cynical age, some might say he was naive. But out of that belief came Bill's respect and high expectation for his students. If they failed, it was because there was a good reason for their failure. He never lost respect for them.

We all left law school with a strong personal affection and admiration for Professor Bishop. The respect and interest he showed in us was reciprocated, as it usually is. As I have spoken to alumni around the country, one of the first questions asked is "How is Professor Bishop?" It is an expression of interest which does not surprise me: I, too, would have asked. When I have encountered foreign alumni abroad, the inquiry has been even more common. The scores of foreign students who studied with him and for whom his personal interest was great remember him with gratitude and affection. In many cases they were drawn to this institution by his presence. They did not leave disappointed. Many stayed in touch with him for decades. So too have scores of American students.

Bill Bishop contributed to the greatness of the University of Michi-

gan Law School in many ways, some of which only became apparent to me after we became colleagues. But perhaps his greatest contribution came in the loyalty and affection he inspired in his students, a loyalty and affection which was more than personal and benefited the institution as a whole. He was a Michigan man, whose own devotion to the institution ran deep. He helped make Michigan men and women of many others.

By the time we became colleagues I knew Bill well. I came to know him as an extraordinary scholar, and to appreciate his role in bringing the law school to the forefront in international and comparative law. But I also saw the same gentle, courtly, self-effacing man who respected every one of his colleagues, young and old, and maintained a personal interest in every one. Never petty, when he spoke we knew it was important. A faculty comprised of Bill Bishops would be a wonderful place to work.

Bill was the consummate scholar and teacher. But he was far more. He was devoted to Mary and his daughter Betty. He loved music and Michigan sports. An outdoorsman and hiker, he seemed to have a love affair with wildlife. His interest in young people and his community was reflected in his lifelong service to scouting. Above all, he was a good and gentle man who enriched all who knew him.

At Bill's funeral the organ played "The Yellow and the Blue." Some probably did not know what it was. But Bill would have known. I can think of no music more fitting to celebrate the life of this good and loyal Michigan man. We should end on those notes today.