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Memorial: Beverley J. Pooley (1934-2001)

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Memorial: Beverley J. Pooley (1934–2001)

¶1 Beverley J. Pooley died at the age of sixty-seven on August 23, 2001, of kidney failure due to complications from pancreatic cancer. His death came shockingly fast, for he had only learned how seriously ill he was the week before.

¶2 The bare facts about Bev's life cannot begin to describe what he was to the local community, the University of Michigan, and the law school world. Born in England in 1934, he earned B.A. and LL.B. degrees from Cambridge University; and LL.M., S.J.D., and M.A. in Library Science degrees from the University of Michigan. During that time he served in the Legislative Research Center at the Michigan Law School and as a lecturer at the University of Ghana for two years. In 1963 he was appointed assistant professor (later promoted to associate and then full professor) at the Michigan Law School, where he succeeded Hobart Coffey as director of the law library in 1964. From 1984 to 1996 he served as associate dean for the law library after I became its director. In 1998, he retired from the law school.

¶3 Bev Pooley's scholarly interests were wide and began with land-use controls, extended to Ghanian and African law, and spread to include sports and entertainment law in the last decade of his career. Throughout, he was an extremely popular teacher of contract law.

¶4 His avocation was the theater, and he may have been the most theatrical professor ever to serve on a law school faculty, using his acting abilities to reach students in ways other methods did not. We law librarians had only occasional glimpses of his oratorical skills. One occurred during the 1982 AALL Annual Meeting in Detroit, when he addressed the closing banquet and made many of us laugh harder than we ever had before at his comments about one of our programs. The program was about law libraries providing service to those who were not lawyers. The title, which struck none of us as either odd or funny until Bev said the words, was "Lay Users in the Law Library." He said he had been unaware of that happening and wondered where exactly it occurred in his library. And just before coming on stage, seeing me bedecked with the obligatory ribbons and badges, he greeted me with astonishment, "Margaret, by god, you look just like a prize horse."

¶5 Bev's ability to link the theater to the classroom is best illustrated by a 1970s event that is famous at Michigan. Unbeknownst to his students, Bev invited actor John Houseman, at the peak of his fame as a Harvard law professor in the *Paper Chase*,¹ to teach a contracts class. Students arrived in class that day to find Houseman, not Pooley, at the podium. Houseman began the class by calling on a student far in the back to respond to a tricky hypothetical. The student, played by

1. THE PAPER CHASE (Twentieth-Century Fox 1973).

Pooley, fumbled the question. Houseman summoned him to the front of the room, gave him a coin, and ordered him to “call your mother and give her the news that you will never be a lawyer.” The scene, of course, was straight out of the movie the students knew so well, and they erupted with delighted laughter at Pooley’s performance.

¶6 I learned a great deal from Bev, as did everyone who worked with him. He used what I call the Socratic style of management, always asking hard questions and never providing easy answers. But when I sought answers to his questions through my own investigation, research, and thinking, I always emerged wiser. When I proposed what I thought was a good solution to him, I could count on Bev to uncover every possible ramification and help resolve them all. When a problem appeared to be an unresolvable dilemma (such as sharing space with the *Michigan Law Review* staff when we moved into new quarters in 1981), he found solutions. He supported my career in every possible way, from hiring me to enabling me to become the director.

¶7 Bev’s most significant contribution to legal research and law librarianship was probably his support of Jerry Dupont’s Law Library Microform Consortium (LLMC). Jerry began his career working for Bev at Michigan, and when Jerry was ready to start LLMC, Bev was ready with ideas for securing financial support, what to film, and how to organize the consortium. He served on its board for many years and made sure that the Michigan Law Library was one of the few to purchase virtually everything LLMC produced in its first years and to provide much of the material that was filmed.

¶8 Locally, Bev was famous all over town for his performances in local theater, including many Gilbert and Sullivan shows. Our colleague at Harvard, Terry Martin, provided the most appropriate response to my e-mail with the news of Bev’s death² when he wrote:

This is a sad surprise. As Colonel Fairfax says in *The Yeoman of the Guard*: “In this happy little community, Death, when he comes, [should do] so in punctual and business-like fashion; and, like a courtly gentleman, [give] due notice of his advent, that one may not be taken unawares.”

In 1968 Bev Pooley provided comparative law training to a small group of Peace Corps lawyers, including myself, as we set out to teach in West Africa. He was a charming and funny man quite enamored of Gilbert and Sullivan. He seemed to enjoy being a librarian so much it quite attracted me to the profession.

Is life a boon?
If so, it must befall
That Death, whene’er he call,
Must call too soon.

2. Posting of Margaret Leary, mleary@umich.edu, Sad News, to lawlibdir@lawlib.wuacc.edu (Aug. 28, 2001) (copy on file with author).

I'm sure Bev would agree with Fairfax that his life was a boon.³

¶9 As would we all.—*Margaret Leary*⁴

3. Posting of Terry Martin, martin@law.harvard.edu, Sad News, to lawlibdirl@lawlib.wuacc.edu (Aug. 28, 2001) (copy on file with author).

4. Librarian and Director, University of Michigan Law Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

