
**TRIBUTE:
TO PROFESSOR WILLIAM E.
RYCKMAN, JR.**

“I GIVE YOU THE JOY OF YOUR LEGACY”

DAVID A. RICE¹

William E. Ryckman, Philip S. Beck Professor of Law – my friend, “I give you the joy of” the resounding applause of your colleagues and students, present and past, for teaching and inculcating the importance of self-demanding analytical rigor and utmost professional integrity. Although I left the Boston University faculty in 1986, Bill has remained a particular friend and colleague. “Professor Bill” has shown all the meaning, feeling, and sense of personal good fortune he intends when he says: “This is the best job in the world.” More important, he has lived and taught through his life and actions the commitments and responsibilities that inhere in true friendship – respect, moral support, loyalty, and generosity always and incomparable self-giving to others in particularly difficult and critical times.

There are so many memories to share, but I start with the beginning. In 1966, I became the twenty-first full-time member of the now vastly larger Boston University School of Law faculty, and so made Bill a senior colleague, role model, and novice mentor just four years after his appointment. I came direct from a federal appeals court clerkship, so measured against his pre-

¹ Professor of Law and Director of the Portuguese-American Comparative Law Center, Roger Williams University School of Law. Member of Boston University School of Law faculty, 1966-1986, and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, 1977-1981.

The title seems suitable to the occasion of Bill Ryckman’s retirement. He is not just an uncommonly great law teacher. He also is a non-law man drawn to the sea as skilled captain, collector of books about and student of great single-handed voyages, and devotee of the best historical “under sail” naval fiction literature. Readers of the estimable Patrick O’Brian’s great Aubrey/Maturin historical novels will readily identify the title’s reference to O’Brian’s protagonists extending their heart-felt congratulations in very special moments with the “I give you [the] joy of . . .” expression. It would have been better, of course, if Bill Ryckman’s beloved Chicago Cubs had finally won a pennant and I could have parlayed nautical and sport into “I Give You the Joy of Your Pennant.”

teaching, post-LL.B. experience I truly was young, green, and impressionable.² Yet it is not so much from then, but from many years of life, favored with memorable experiences, that I draw and share recollections.

Perhaps the story that exemplifies at least one aspect of the “best job in the world” is that of first learning so many of my colleagues – all from in different fields – seriously and critically read, and spiritedly discussed, the most important decisions of the day. The original third floor Faculty Lounge at 765 Commonwealth was a place where one could regularly hear the sounds of Professors Dan MacLeod, Bob Liberman, Bob Kent, Bill Ryckman, Henry Monaghan, George Brown, and young Len Strickman animatedly dissecting, discussing, and debating one of the latest Supreme Court decisions. The faculty lived week to week awaiting the arrival of the next U.S. Supreme Court Law Week, there being at that time no WestLaw or LEXIS from which to download and print copies. Think about that: this group included a third of the full-time faculty members, and even more when Paul Liacos, Dean Paul Siskind, or – daringly – even I joined. No regular brownbag presentations required! Quite extraordinary, impressive, intellectually exhilarating, and a bit daunting, even after spending a year working in the company of other federal appeals court law clerks.

And now I come to Ryckman as Ryckman memories. It was immediately clear that Bill loved sports as both an active participant and a fan. As a fan, he had the foresight to buy low, purchasing Boston Patriots and Boston Celtics season tickets when – yes, believe it – the Bruins were Boston’s tough tickets and it was possible to walk from the Law School to Fenway Park and buy a good ticket for the day’s game. The prospect of the New England Patriots³ or pre-Bird-Parrish-McHale-era basketball tickets ever being scarce was unimaginable. Many times I enjoyed the benefit of that foresight, attending many Celtics games in the old Boston Garden with him, including some of the most memorable NBA Playoff and Championship Series games of the Bird-Parrish-McHale and the Lakers’ Magic Johnson era on one of his tickets. And in the Garden (though I don’t think his thoroughly intimidated first-year students would have imagined it possible), “Professor” William Ryckman was “Just Plain Bill”: down-to-earth and one of the guys who came together every year in the same section, sharing a Celtics passion and, often, offering strong opinions about the state of the team, Garden management, professional basketball, and outside-the-Garden issues of the day.

² Even so, I did not hold my expected distinction of being the faculty’s youngest member. That did not come until several years later when Leonard Strickman, who also joined the faculty that year, left to take up a U.S. Senate Committee staff position.

³ He bought his “Boston Patriots” season tickets when Alan Miller ‘65 played for the upstart American Football League’s Pats who were and remained itinerant until, in 1970, they found home in the old Foxboro (*nee* Sullivan) Stadium, whence they became the “New England Patriots.” Previously, home field had been BU’s old Nickerson Stadium, 1960-1962; Fenway Park 1963-1968; BC Alumni Stadium 1969; Harvard Stadium 1970.

When I first met Bill he sailed his beautiful wood-hull *Kestrel* and a catamaran – though the second ended after the cat broke his back with a bounce that threw him onto its deck. Yet I crewed on the Captain’s next boat, *Chester O’Bannon*, primarily in and out of Boston Harbor. We had some great days sailing, always supplied with fresh-brewed, brandy-warmed coffee to ward off the morning chill, later refreshed as the day warmed with a chilled brew or two, and well fed by Loretta’s great sandwiches. Time passed quickly as we worked the boat and winds, else engaged in conversation or, in contrast, just quietly enjoying the sights, the liberating feel of being under sail, and the music of water rippling along the hull. We talked about our work, recent cases, news, political events, and much else.

At other times under sail (or aided by auxiliary diesel when the wind failed us) I learned, as Bill’s students more regularly did in class, his skills in rigorously testing critical thinking. He would probe and discuss my thoughts about how the Supreme Judicial Court – headed much of that time by our former faculty colleague, Chief Justice Paul J. Liacos – had recently interpreted and applied legislation in which I had a drafting hand. On other occasions, the topic might be Massachusetts tidelands ownership and use, beach access, or even coastal management law. The conversations were a bit delicate at times, but always mutually respectful and edifying, because my work intersected Bill’s property and land use law expertise and teaching, his own Chapter 40A zoning law legislative drafting, and his work with various town counsels and boards on zoning and land use law.⁴

Ah, yes, back to time shared with Bill Ryckman, my friend, being “Just Plain Bill.” Sailing together, we had days favored by tide and fair winds on which we sailed outside the expansive and island-studded harbor, sometimes only to find ourselves engaged in laborious but strategic tacking. At others the payoff was joyfully running with wind-filled sails on a beam reach south toward Minot’s Light or north toward Nahant and Marblehead, and back for a close-up of historic Boston Light which was originally built in 1716. Alas, it was not such a fine day when we set out to follow the *U.S.S. Constitution* – as it sailed with assistance of tugboats from Boston to a grand rendezvous off

⁴ In another circumstance, Bill drew me into conversation and, through it, taught me about copyright and trade secret law concerning some computer software litigation he was working on. He also arranged that I consult on the matter with what then was the law firm of Shapiro, Israel, and Weiner, most of whose partners had been his students and young alumni Legal Writing Instructors I had supervised as Director of the Legal Writing and Moot Court Programs for several years beginning in 1966. Through my consultancy work I began to appreciate how Bill’s study, reading, and analysis invariably led him to fix on the right questions to ask, and how the various ways he asked them could equally put a student, trial or deposition witness, or – in this instance – colleague on his or her toes. That case was but one of several matters in which I learned that Bill’s instincts and skills as a lawyer (but definitely not his personal fulfillment) rivaled those of William E. Ryckman, Law Professor.

Marblehead. Outside the harbor the wind completely died. Old Ironsides and accompanying fleet became increasingly distant shadowy images lost in the day's dense haze. As we struggled to follow under onboard, small-engine power, the "Japanese wind" (in Bill's bob to the engine's country of origin), a sudden sound and streaking larboard image made me wonder if we might be going to Davy Jones's Locker! Instead we just had an extraordinary close-up underbelly view of the Blue Angels in close formation as they swooped very low directly overhead and banked toward Marblehead. It seemed to me that they were just above the top of our mast, a special moment in an otherwise frustrating day. But surely the best times on the water were when Loretta or Mike Melton, Bill's principal crew, joined us – though it was just Mike and Bill for whom a great winter day was to sail lake-skimming ice boats in winter on Lake Quannapowet.

We played a lot of tennis, on occasion with our friends and colleagues Bob Kent and, less often, Bob Liberman, Dan MacLeod, Jim Henderson or others. Only once did I have the opportunity to even hit balls with the faculty's real tennis maestro, Paul Wallace, but I believe Bill was more fortunate in that regard. Occasionally doubles would include a student, something that John Englander recalled for me at the dinner announcing the establishment of the Philip S. Beck Professor of Law chair and celebrating Bill's appointment as its first holder.⁵

Eventually the tennis group dwindled and we became the "last tennis amigos," meeting weekly or more often in vigorous singles. And vigorous and competitive we played because neither of us trucked much with losing. Bill played a bit in the style that Whitey Ford and Warren Spann had when they came to pitch in baseball. Bill had a good fast ball when he wanted it and the finesse, agility, and tenacity to work the court and my legs. So, he made me pay the price at every opportunity I gave him or he created. Though not without talent or skill myself, I countered with a game that stubbornly refused to accept that I was no longer in my twenties with my dogged, unimaginative, but often enough successful reliance on a repertoire of power serves and hard (and sometimes ripping) ground strokes – even to the point of sticking to my last, even on "bad double fault days" (infinitely worse, I submit, than "bad hair days"). Occasionally I won a set or two, but it really was not until Bill's right shoulder rotator cuff problems set him on course for eventual surgery that I more consistently claimed a set or two or a match.

Yet courtside and refreshment evoke many non-tennis images and memories as well. Post-play was a brief time enjoyed at ease with an excellent friend,

⁵ What greater honor and distinction can a law teacher have than a former student and continuing long-time friend endowing a Chair and nominating his professor as its first occupant? The closest rival, at least for Bill, was Phil Beck previously presenting his former prof a display-mounted baseball, personally autographed to Bill from the man he's long called "The Greatest Living American" – Ernie Banks, the legendary Chicago Cubs Baseball Hall of Famer. No, not greater, just very special and different.

talking together about many things ranging from law to us and life. It was on one such day I learned about his very special reason for naming his sailboat the *Chester O'Bannon*, and the task and logistical puzzle of moving his new joy from on-land storage in Cambridge to Boston Harbor. Also, we first learned as we met at the Mt. Auburn Club for tennis early on June 19, 1986 that the greatest-ever University of Maryland basketball player and projected next great star of the Boston Celtics, Len Bias, shattered so many dreams early that morning by overdosing on cocaine less than forty-eight hours after Red Auerbach selected him at Number 2 in the NBA draft.⁶

Far more significant is that it was through some of those conversations that I far better came to know the big heart and loyalty from which Bill so generously and richly gave comfort, support, and assistance over many years to beloved colleagues and members of their families in times of difficulty, health crises, and even dying: Eugene "Doc" Roemele, Bob Liberman (in whose celebration Bill fulfilled a special personal wish by single-handedly planting a large tulip bed alongside Mugar Library at the head of the stairs to the Law Library Annex and Law Review offices), Paul Wallace, Daniel "Dan Mac" MacLeod, and, in perhaps the most drawn-out and wrenching experience, his very special friend Mike Melton during his courageous battles through and recoveries from various major surgeries, medical emergencies, illnesses, and ultimately fatal disease. How fitting it was that Bill's distinguished record was recognized and honored in 2000 by receipt of the Michael W. Melton Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching. Among the many things Bill shared with Mike, who definitely "died too young," was a genuine love of teaching. Equally, each set even higher standards for themselves as teachers than they did for their students' preparation and participation, something that might come as a revelation to Bill's recent or current students. Bill and Mike also believed that law study is not just about cases, statutes and regulations or even that old cliché "learning to think like a lawyer," let alone scholarly construction or critique of new legal or multi-disciplinary theory. Rather, the endeavor was engagement in the ultimate in legal and life skills training – preparing students to be their own best teachers for the rest of their lives.

It says much about the man we honor that it was years after Bill's receipt of the Melton Award that I learned about that distinction. We all know this very special person we join to honor on the occasion of his retirement is an extraordinarily humble and self-effacing person. Never would he announce his recognitions, accomplishments, or contributions, leaving that knowledge to be gained through a sort of osmosis-trickling diffusion among friends, colleagues, students, alumni, and the Bar. But, oh, how much he has done and given, and how that knowledge perforce has spread and endures!

⁶ As things would transpire, 1986 also turned out to be the last time the Celtics would have a top one, two or three draft choice.

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TO WILLIAM E. RYCKMAN, JR.

ROBERT B. KENT⁷

I remember a balmy February day in 1962, bright sun, temperature around 70; a young lawyer from Indiana came to visit the BU Law School at Ashburton Place, to explore the possibility of his joining the faculty. It was indeed a gorgeous, unbelievable February day. "Is it always like this?", he asked, and to this day he insists we all said, "Oh yes, yes indeed." If this little deception occurred, it simply bespeaks how much we wanted him to come. And so in September of 1962, Bill Ryckman joined the faculty of Boston University School of Law. The rest is history, and what a history it is. I thought my own 30 year tenure at this place was long, but his has spanned 46 years and only now is coming to a close. We all know that as a teacher he is a legend, disciplined, tough, unfailingly prepared, and so respectful of the process. The era in which I was brought up dictated a jacket and tie in the classroom, for Bill at least a two piece suit. One day he came into class and spied a student wearing a baseball cap. "Mr. so and so, there are baseball players who wear their caps backwards. They call them pitchers and infielders and outfielders. Then there are lawyers who wear baseball caps in court; they call them ex-lawyers. This is court." The rigor of his classroom did not stem from a meanness of spirit. It came from a conviction that preparation is the hallmark of the lawyer, that precision of speech and thought are essential, and that they go together. I have heard courses such as Property which Bill has taught described as doctrinal courses. Bill Ryckman has been no peddler of doctrine. True, one learned a lot about property in the course of preparing, analyzing, and responding to questions. Beyond that one acquired skills in relation to the process and respect for that process.

There is more. For 42 years Professor Ryckman has been Faculty Advisor to the Law Review. It is in some measure due to that presence that the publication has become stronger, a great asset to the law school. He has been at the core of this school's disciplinary process, its mountains of professional responsibility. It was stressful work, heartrending at times, but so essential to the integrity of the institution.

⁷ LL.B., Boston University, 1949; Professor Emeritus, Cornell Law School.

This professor has meant, still means, so much to his colleagues, and those colleagues include Margaret der Hagopian, who has been such an important part of the place since 1947. Time renders it inevitable that some are no longer with us: Dean Elwood Hettrick, who made the right decision in 1962, his successor Paul Siskind, preserver of the environment in which good teaching could prosper, and those special friends of Bill Ryckman, Bob Lieberman, Dan MacLeod, Mike Melton, Austin Stickells, Paul Wallace. They knew first hand what Margo and I know well. This man would not simply go an extra mile for his friends – he has gone, he still goes many, many more such miles. There is no limit to the lengths he will go.

William E. Ryckman, Jr. is the Philip S. Beck Professor of Law. Phil Beck, a 1976 graduate of the school and a very successful Chicago lawyer, in 2005, endowed the chair which bears his name, a wonderful contribution to the school. I know that he derives much satisfaction from the identity of the first occupant of that chair, his teacher and friend, Bill Ryckman.

Phil Beck graduated in 1976. That fall came the class of 1979, one of my favorite classes. Among its members was Loretta M. Smith, who became a research assistant to Professor Ryckman. She is now Bill's wife. She has been a partner at Goodwin Procter, then an Assistant District Attorney for Middlesex County, and now Assistant Attorney General of Massachusetts. She is also an adjunct teacher at our law school, a highly respected member of the community. Our warm wishes for Bill's retirement include our hopes for many happy years for them both. A leading legal educator once said that those in the legal profession have an opportunity to create something unique. Bill Ryckman has made the most of this. This law school is better, and thousands of its graduates are stronger, because he has been here.

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FROM A FORMER STUDENT**PHILIP S. BECK⁸**

Thirty-five years ago this fall, the members of Section C assembled for our first day of Property. We were apprehensive. Kindly second- and third-year students had alerted us, somewhat gleefully, that our Section had been blessed with the most demanding professor in the Law School.

Professor Ryckman did not disappoint. He expected us to be prepared and to be capable of disciplined discussion. There was not an ounce of condescension or paternalism in him. He treated us as professionals, and he required us to act as if we were.

I still have my notes from Property. I have never had occasion to cite a single one of the cases we reviewed. Nor can I remember ever having applied any of the legal principles that we squeezed out of them. But every day I practice law, or at least every day I do it well, I use the real subject matter of Professor Ryckman's class: how to think like a lawyer.

Thousands of students have had their professional lives enriched by Professor Ryckman. We are profoundly grateful.

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THANK YOU*Stewart T. Moran⁹*

Every year in early March the outgoing Editor-in-Chief of the Law Review walks over to the Law Tower with the newly elected Editor-in-Chief – from the steps leading out of the Annex into the sunlight, through the Japanese garden, and up to the 10th floor of the Tower – for the new EIC's first meeting with Professor Ryckman. The meeting begins with a discussion of various Boston-area sports teams. In the middle, there is talk of how student Notes should be handled and other administrative formalities. In the end Professor Ryckman explains that the students run the *Law Review*; no one else. That

⁸ J.D., *magna cum laude*, Boston University, 1976; Partner, Bartlit, Beck, Herman, Palenchar & Scott.

⁹ J.D., Boston University, 2008 (expected).

you, as the incoming EIC, along with the entire incoming board, will have complete autonomy to run the publication as you see fit.

At the time, this was rather daunting – no one on the new editorial board had ever run anything like this before; what if I made a mistake? But now I know that Professor Ryckman was always watching us closely (through our wonderful, informal weekly chats). I now appreciate that he let us run our own show because he cared about us deeply and had the utmost confidence in us. Most importantly, he understood that running this publication by ourselves – with mistakes and all – is an incredible educational and professional experience. So, on behalf of this and every other editorial board that had the honor to work with you, I say: Thank you, Professor Ryckman.