

In Memory of Professor James E. Bond

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Jim Bond was dean of the law school when I first joined the faculty in 1988. Because he was the only dean I had ever known, I did not fully appreciate at the time how extraordinary he was. Looking back now, it is hard to know where to begin to describe what made Jim Bond such a superlative dean and inspiring role model. If I had to sum it up in a single word, the one I would pick is “engagement.” In every facet of his deanship, Jim modeled what it means to be truly engaged—as a legal educator, scholar, faculty colleague, dean, and person.

In the classroom, Jim taught by engaging his students through dialogue that opened their eyes to what it meant to wrestle with interpreting and applying the law. Unsurprisingly, students lucky enough to have had him as a professor treasured the rare gift that he provided to them in his teaching. As hard as he made them work, his students loved every minute of it. When someone asked him his profession, Jim would answer that he was a teacher, and I think for him, that identity was at the core of his professional being.

As a dean and faculty colleague, Jim loved nothing more than engaging with faculty, discussing politics, philosophy, and historiography—not to score points in debating but for the sheer pleasure of intellectual engagement. I recall many such exchanges over the years with Jim. We often had very different ideas about the topics we were discussing, and once, I asked him why he took such pleasure in dialogues with people like me who did not always agree with his positions. Jim answered with the impish twinkle in his eye that we all knew so well and said, “Well, there is always the chance that I can get you to see the error of your ways.” Then, with perfect comedic timing, he paused and said, “or you’ll get me to see the error of mine!”

Jim made a point of keeping in touch with each and every member of the faculty, reading our scholarship, poring over our student evaluations, and conversing with us in the faculty lounge and his office. At the end of every academic year, Jim wrote a detailed letter to each member of the faculty, summing up what he thought our accomplishments were that year and identifying challenges in our continuing professional development. I kept every one of those letters. The letters were, of course, of incalculable help in my development as a scholar and a teacher. They

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were also beautifully written—a personal missive from a man who was not just my boss but also a fellow traveler on the road of teaching and writing about the law.

Jim did not, however, confine his written communications with faculty to his annual letters. Whenever our lives were marked, whether by a signature achievement or a personal crisis or setback, Jim let us know that he appreciated what we were experiencing by sending a personal, handwritten note conveying his sincere best wishes, always ending with, “As ever, Jim.”

As a scholar, Jim researched and wrote about the history of the ratification debates on the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, culminating in his 1997 book, *No Easy Walk to Freedom: Reconstruction and the Ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment*. It remains an unparalleled work of careful research and analysis on the deeply contested process through which the Constitution was amended and, through that amendment, ushered into a new era of law and sense of ourselves as a nation. What shines through in reading the book, however, is not just its value as a sterling example of legal history. In its opening paragraphs, Jim makes the case for why works of legal history matter to us today. As he noted, the questions underlying the ratification debates, often bitter and contentious, divided the country then as deeply as the Civil War had. And, he went on to say, “[T]hey divide [us] still.”² That is, Jim believed that history matters because our own world is the product of that history; understanding it is essential if we are to appreciate and transcend our past. For Jim, legal history was a form of engagement with our past and, through that, our present.

As dean, Jim was necessarily deeply engaged with the greater university in which the law school was situated. In the early years of his deanship, that was the University of Puget Sound—an institution that was not always wholeheartedly convinced that it needed a law school. Jim’s deft engagement with the university leadership overcame those qualms and helped them to understand the value that the law school added. Later on, in his second tour of duty as dean after the law school was acquired by Seattle University, Jim took the lead in engaging with the university community, helping us all to understand our new institutional and cultural environment and modeling for us how the law school could best integrate into it. Jim’s active engagement in reimagining the law school as a part of a Jesuit university smoothed the path of our integration into Seattle University. Jim believed firmly that, although we had not always been part of the university community, the fundamental values of the law school and

2. JAMES E. BOND, *NO EASY WALK TO FREEDOM: RECONSTRUCTION AND THE RATIFICATION OF THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT I* (1997).

its faculty were entirely consistent with the values of Seattle University. He challenged us as a law school to engage fully and sincerely with the culture and mission of our new university home and, in doing so himself, showed both the law school and the greater university communities that he was right. The law school today reflects the engagement with Seattle University's mission that Jim made possible through his articulated engagement with the university administration and colleagues.

As I hope I have conveyed in this short remembrance, Jim Bond was an exemplary dean of the law school. What is more, he was an exemplary human being. At a time when honest, respectful interpersonal interactions with those we do not fully agree with have sadly become rare, Jim Bond's enduring legacy will be that he taught us what it means to be fully, humanly engaged with others, and for that, I will always cherish his memory.