

Remembrances of a Friend

*John Q. La Fond**

I first met Jim and Georgana Bond while attending a Ford Foundation Workshop for beginning criminal law teachers at NYU School of Law in the summer of 1973. We were both starting new careers as law school professors; Jim at Wake Forest University and me as a visitor at University of Colorado Boulder. Jim was clearly the star of our group. He was also the first true Libertarian I had ever met. I could not understand how such a bright and articulate young man could take this particular philosophy seriously. Needless to say, this prompted several provocative conversations between us. Jim was always thoughtful, respectful, and persuasive in defense of his positions. Graciously and with humor, he often forced me to rethink many of my first principles. We thoroughly enjoyed each other's company and parted as friends and friendly intellectual combatants.

Our paths would cross again. We would chat at meetings of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) from time to time. When Fred Tausend announced that he would step down as dean in 1986, the law school launched a dean search chaired by Professor William Oltman. After several months the search committee had identified one or two possible successors to Fred, but none of them generated a great deal of enthusiasm. As the search continued, I went to an AALS meeting in New Orleans. While there, I ran into Jim and we talked. Jim was rethinking whether he wanted to stay at Wake Forest and was considering what else he might do. Because I thought so highly of him, I mentioned that the law school was in the middle of a dean search and had not yet found an outstanding candidate. "Would you be interested?" I asked. He was. Professor Oltman, Dean Tausend, and I had an informal interview with him there and the rest is history; we had found our new dean.

Though without significant managerial experience, Jim was a quick study and a prodigious worker. He was also a gifted public speaker, thoughtful and thorough planner, and sought consensus whenever possible. He assembled an extremely able administrative staff. Jim and Phil Phibbs, the president of the University of Puget Sound (UPS) at the time, developed a mutually respectful and productive working relationship and a long-lasting personal friendship. It was no wonder that he also

* Former Edward A. Smith/Missouri Emeritus Chair in Law, the Constitution, and Society at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law.

established a genuine rapport with faculty, students, and staff. Jim threw himself into developing support from our alumni and the Tacoma-Seattle area community. In sum, the fit between Jim and the future ambitions of the law school community was perfect.

Jim arrived at a critical moment in the law school's history. Dean Tausend had done a superb job of making areas of legal communities more knowledgeable about the quality of a UPS legal education and the competence of its graduates. He also added clinical programs and great new faculty members—it was time to make the national legal and educational communities aware of this Northwest gem. Jim set himself and the school an ambitious agenda: the school must continue to attract and retain well-qualified faculty members, enroll interesting and qualified students, and develop a sound financial base. He particularly encouraged faculty scholarship and participation in academic and professional conferences, law reform, and similar professional and community service, while also making sure that the faculty remembered and excelled at teaching and mentoring students.

With the expansion of faculty and programs over the years, the experience, diversity, and sense of institutional purpose embraced by the faculty became more diverse and consensus more difficult. Should the School strive for recognition and status on the national stage seeking the most elite students and emphasizing faculty scholarship? Or should it seek a more inclusive student body, embracing students from many different racial and economic backgrounds, thereby providing broad access to a legal education and service to less represented members of society? These issues, of course, were not unexpected. They were the same issues contemporary society was facing. Disagreement was predictable, conflict unavoidable. Jim understood that evolution of the law school community's original vision was inevitable. The challenge was to guide this process with wisdom, empathy, mutual respect, and civility. Jim succeeded.

Just when the law school community had seemingly settled into a general vision of what its future should look like and set its course, the totally unexpected happened. Seattle University had signed a non-public agreement to purchase the law school. Others will undoubtedly describe and comment on this life-changing event but, suffice it to say that after considering this drastic change of circumstances, Jim concluded that the leadership of the University of Puget Sound at the time had fundamentally betrayed the loyalty and exceptional efforts of the law school community. As a matter of principle, he resigned from the deanship. Surely, he must have thought that his time at the helm had ended for good.

That was not to be. In relatively short order, Jim was once again dean of the law school; now, of course, for Seattle University School of Law. Major challenges in implementing the new future of the law school loomed. Jim was absolutely essential for meeting them. He succeeded so well in this endeavor, in large measure, by serving as an honest broker between Seattle University, the new sponsor of the law school, and the diverse members of the law school community. He made everyone—especially members of the predecessor UPS Law School—see the amazing possibilities in this new identity, affiliation, facility, and location.

I think it is fair to say that very few law school deans in modern America have had the extraordinary range of challenges in guiding a recently established law school, dependent so much on the effort of so many individuals and institutions, as Jim Bond. That he had so much success was, to me, totally expected. Simply put, Jim possessed precisely the personal qualities and skills necessary for success. However, I think the real reason Jim was so good at his job is clear: Jim liked people and was genuinely interested in everyone he met. He saw potential in each of them and wanted them to succeed. Jim did his best to see to it that they did.

Jim came from a modest socioeconomic background. He was, I believe, the first in his family to go to college, let alone Harvard Law School. But he had the talent, drive, and discipline to accomplish so much in his life—he understood what opportunity meant.

Away from work, Jim was often immersed in history and the world of ideas. One night at dinner he asked friends who were there, “In what historical period of human history would you live if you could choose?” He chose the American Revolution, specifically when the founding fathers were drafting the Constitution in Philadelphia. (I chose World War II because the stakes were so high.) Of course, we spent some time exploring the choices we all made. To this day his question intrigues me.

Jim was also a funny guy. His humor was often self-effacing, subtle, and captured the absurdities in human life. He often celebrated a good joke of his with his unique smile and a twinkle in his eye. In addressing a group of physicians in Tacoma, he reminded them that during the early American experience, while physicians were cutting patients to bleed them as a cure, lawyers were drafting the United States Constitution—he had no fear. But he could also be candid and funny about himself, remarking once: “It was at Harvard Law School that I realized I would not be President of the United States.” He was at ease with himself and his place in the universe, and he made everyone he met feel at ease in theirs. The Jim you saw in public was also the private Jim.

After I moved to Kansas City to become the inaugural holder of the Edward A. Smith-Missouri Chair in Law, the Constitution, and Society at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Law School in 1998, I realized how much I missed being with Jim and Georgana. I will always remember them fondly.