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# MILNER S. BALL: PROOF THAT ONE PROFESSOR CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

*David E. Shipley\**

Can one person make a difference in the world? When asked about their accomplishments during their careers, people often respond by saying something like, "I just hope I made a difference, and that I am leaving the place a little bit better than when I arrived."

Milner S. Ball, the Harmon W. Caldwell Chair in Constitutional Law, is proof positive that one person can make a difference in the world. There is no doubt that he has made a substantial difference for the better during his distinguished career at the University of Georgia, as a campus minister, as a non-traditional law student who was the First Honor Graduate in the Class of 1971 and editor in chief of the *Georgia Law Review*, and as a highly regarded professor at the School of Law since 1978. A man of deep convictions and beliefs as well as integrity and compassion, Milner Ball has made our law school a better place not just by his prolific writings and his talents in the classroom, but also by his example, by his willingness to speak out and take stands on difficult issues, and by his actions. Milner Ball has not just talked the talk; he has walked the walk throughout his career.

The body of scholarship researched and written by Milner is impressive not just in terms of high quality as well as quantity, but also in its incredible diversity. He has, for example, written on constitutional law, religion, law and religion, environmental law, Native American law, jurisprudence, history, the law of the sea, and international law. This is not an exhaustive list. The depth and breadth of his work is impressive. He is a scholar of international stature. Milner's standing in the academy goes well beyond the confines of law, legal education, and jurisprudence. He was doing interdisciplinary work long before most law schools started touting their interdisciplinary initiatives.

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His work has enhanced the reputation of the University of Georgia School of Law. His scholarship, without more, merits recognition and praise upon his retirement. Milner Ball is one of the most highly regarded and influential scholars in the history of our law school.

Moreover, Milner Ball enriched and enhanced the law school and its academic program in other important ways. In particular, I want to say a few things about the vital role he played on the faculty, in word and deed, in encouraging, supporting, and engaging in clinical legal education and public interest law. The School of Law has a varied array of popular clinical offerings, and the institution's commitment to public interest law and public service is exemplary. The school owes the establishment of the Public Interest Practicum to Milner Ball. He pushed hard for creating the Civil Clinic, now under the leadership of Professor Alex Scherr, which offers public interest placements throughout Athens and northeast Georgia, including Atlanta. He played a major role in organizing the Athens Justice Project—a local nonprofit organization that helps men and women with criminal records make that difficult transition from incarceration and drug or alcohol dependency to being productive and contributing members of society. In addition, during my deanship he spent a research leave and part of another semester working as a lawyer in what was then the law school's Public Defender Clinic with Professor Russell Gabriel as the director/managing attorney. He told me that his experience in that office was invigorating, that he greatly admired the work of the Western Circuit's public defenders, and that this real-world experience enriched his teaching and understanding of lawyering. I am sure there are only a few, if any other, legal scholars of Milner Ball's stature and standing who have jumped into the trenches like this to enrich their appreciation of the rule of law, lawyers, jurisprudence, and ethics while trying to make a difference by helping indigent men and women in desperate need of high quality legal representation. It is difficult to think of anyone more deserving of the "Working in the Public Interest Lifetime Achievement Award" than Milner S. Ball.

Milner Ball is a great model of the public intellectual who is not just willing, but eager to leave the ivory tower to become engaged in

this profession and the community. He has made a tremendous difference at our law school. He has walked the walk, and I certainly hope others will follow his path.

