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Lyman Ray Patterson: Scholar and Gentle Man

“He truly was a gentleman and a gentle man. He also was a very loyal person ... loyal to his family, to his ideas and to those of us who were his students.”

By Associate Dean and Hosch Professor Paul M. Kurtz

The University of Georgia School of Law community and the legal academy lost a dear friend, an outstanding scholar, and a wonderful colleague and teacher when Ray Patterson died after a long career and a short illness in November 2003.

Professor Patterson made his mark in the areas of intellectual property and legal profession, authoring major books in both areas that will long serve as his legacy. Ray Patterson was an innovative thinker and a masterful writer. He taught generations of students at four leading law schools in the Southeast, serving as dean at one. During his career, Ray practiced law, was an expert witness in many cases throughout the country and often testified before Congress. Many honors were bestowed upon Ray in many venues. Most recently, he was the first recipient of the American Library Association's L. Ray Patterson "Copyright Hero" Award.

Although Ray's work was central to his life, he had many interests outside of the law. He closely followed politics and was a rabid sports fan. He was a devoted husband, loving father and doting grandfather. And, he was a deeply caring friend.

Ray Patterson entered my life very quietly. (Was it not that way with all of us?) He was one of my law professors in my first year of school 34 years ago, but he was unlike most of them. This white-haired man (yes, even then it was pure white) did not yell; he did not try to embarrass; he did not assume the role of a superior; he did not run around the room; he did not make jokes ... all he did was patiently ask us questions. Sometimes he shared with us what he thought the answers were, and sometimes he did not. When we did not have the correct response or any response, genuine disappointment came across his face, not glee. Instead, the smile was reserved for the times

when we actually had moved the discussion forward.

He was the kind of classroom instructor whose self-effacing manner helped his students feel like they were figuring out this "law stuff" more quickly than we really were. Ray was the type of teacher whose impact on his students became clear only as one reflected on his performance ... at the end of the semester while re-reading and digesting one's notes or at the conclusion of one's law school days when engaging him in



a conversation that a former student could imagine was between almost-equals or in the midst of a career when reporting one's progress and being reminded of things discussed in his classroom. Yes, the image evoked by Ray's work as a teacher is the steady tortoise, rather than the flashy hare ... and you remember who came out on top in that contest.

After my years as a student, our paths crossed only infrequently for most of a decade as he went to Emory to serve as dean and I joined the faculty at UGA. When we did see each other at meetings, he always

had a kind word and asked after my wife, my law school classmates and his former Vanderbilt colleagues. Though we worked in very different fields, he always inquired about what exactly it was that I was doing and then, once again, futilely attempted to interest me in the intricacies of copyright or legal ethics. Of course, he was teaching a lot better than I was learning, but I always enjoyed engaging in the effort.

Offering his time and his thoughts to younger colleagues on his own or other faculties was a hallmark of Ray's career. Perhaps because he had benefited so much during his Vanderbilt tenure from the mentorship of Elliott Cheatham, one of the giants of the prior generation of professional responsibility scholars, he always took special interest in assisting people just making their way in his fields. Among others, Craig Joyce, Tom Metzloff, Kenneth Crews and Lolly Gasaway, all now leading scholars themselves, were the beneficiaries of his guidance and interest through the years.

For the past 17 years, Ray Patterson graced the Georgia Law faculty. He taught a large number of students in the basic courses of copyright and legal profession. In addition, he created advanced courses in both fields, served on numerous law school and university committees and contributed to the profession through his work on the Advisory Opinion Panel Committee of the State Bar of Georgia, which provides ethics opinions for attorneys in the state. During his time here, he was a founding father, as it were, of the *Journal of Intellectual Property Law*.

As associate dean for most of his service on our faculty, I had the opportunity to learn lessons in good law school citizenship from Ray Patterson. Whenever I absolutely had to have one more teacher to undertake a summer school teaching assignment or some-

continued on page 16

continued from page 15

body to handle an 8:30 a.m. time slot, I knew I could count on Ray. Indeed, sometimes it made me feel guilty when I contemplated how I might be taking advantage of a friend. Then again, an associate dean has to do what an associate dean has to do.

A recurring bright spot in my day would be an unscheduled visit from my friend and colleague who had a wonderful habit of dropping by just to talk about things ... his latest article, a particularly provocative case or article he had come across, an amicus brief he had recently authored, national or state politics, or the upcoming Georgia football game. (In our final conversation, he assured me this would be the year the Dawgs would solve their Gator problem ... patience, Ray, patience.)

During our conversations, the only "complaint" I ever heard from Ray Patterson was toward the end of every semester when he would assert that I was depriving him of his

academic freedom by insisting he could teach no more classes until the next term. That was our little joke, but inside of his dry humor was his devotion to doing what he loved ... teaching law students.

Actually, he would occasionally lodge other "complaints" ... he always took the time to critique my memoranda to the faculty for grammar and usage. He, after all, had earned a graduate degree in English ... how many times he tried to explain to me the mysteries of distinguishing "that" from "which" and the proper use of the word "hopefully."

I will leave analysis of his scholarly writing to those who are experts in his fields, but I do know one thing about his work without having to consult anybody ... as soft-spoken and gentle as he was in manner and style, he was something of a radical in both of his major fields. In the area of copyright, he said (and proved) things that the publishers did not care for; he also made careful, cogent argu-

ments that did not square with the received wisdom of the legal ethics establishment. And, he did it all without raising his voice or using off-color language. In the 34 years I knew Ray Patterson, I never heard him do either of those things. He truly was a gentleman and a gentle man. He also was a very loyal person ... loyal to his family, to his ideas and to those of us who were his students.

Ray Patterson made it clear that he wanted to teach forever. Part of that wish was completed this past fall semester when he began his copyright and legal malpractice courses and kept going until poor health overtook him. Now, he can turn to the task of teaching posterity through his enduring scholarship and his lessons taught in and out of the classroom. We will miss you, friend. We already do.

This article also appears in volume 11 of the University of Georgia Journal of Intellectual Property Law.



New Home Page Launched

Georgia Law recently launched a new home page design for its Web site. The purpose of the reconfiguration was to improve site navigation and provide a more dynamic looking home page that blends with the remaining pages on the school's site. Please visit our new home page at www.law.uga.edu and bookmark the site for future reference. After all, it is a great way to stay informed of current law school activities.

Advocate Readers' Survey Results

The *Advocate* conducted its first readers' survey in January 2003 to gather information to provide readers with a publication that better reflects their interests. A summary of the findings follow.

Overall, the magazine enjoys a positive image among its constituents (alumni, faculty, staff and students). Ninety-three percent of the respondents described the magazine as "informative," 62 percent as "friendly" and 48 percent identified it as "intelligent." On a scale of 1 to 10 (lowest to highest), the *Advocate* received an average rating of 8.33

on matters of timeliness/relevance of content, readability, quality of writing, illustrations, photography and the overall look of the magazine. Of these areas, the highest marks were earned for overall appearance and readability.

The majority of alumni (63 percent) replied that biannual distribution was adequate with 55 percent of readers spending 15 to 30 minutes reading each issue. The majority (67 percent) of respondents read the magazine within a few days of its arrival. After reading the *Advocate*, nearly 40 percent said they saved an article or issue for future reference and/or discussed or sent an article to someone else, while a quarter of the respon-

dents said they felt compelled to be more active at the law school (by joining an alumni board, contributing financially or other).

Regarding how the magazine accomplished certain objectives, keeping abreast of faculty news and research and staying informed of Georgia Law activities ranked the highest. These were closely followed in order by staying informed about alumni activities, aware of the school's aspirations and objectives, and connected to fellow Georgia Law alumni.

Thank you for responding to this survey. More detailed results can be found at www.law.uga.edu/news/advocate.