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A Tribute to Robert G. Meiners

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A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT G. MEINERS

*Lawrence D. Lee**

My sixth-grade teacher once required each member of the class to write his or her own epitaph. She suggested that in so doing we might focus on what was truly important to us, and perhaps in so doing we would direct our lives toward accomplishing that. I knew Bob Meiners for a third of a century; he was my friend; and he had that focus. He dedicated his life to being who he was. He cherished his home and his family, and he valued his privacy. He respected his friends, and he enjoyed and took pride in his work. He was a conscientious scholar.

A graduate of Muhlenberg College, he earned his juris doctor at the Dickenson Law School in Pennsylvania where he was Editor-in-Chief of the Law Review. He continued his legal studies at Harvard earning an LL.M. He later received the prestigious appointment as a Sterling Fellow at Yale.

With his credentials his alternatives were many and varied, but he wanted to teach. He wanted to impart his knowledge and values to others. He launched his teaching career as an assistant professor at the Santa Clara Law School in 1957. In 1960 he became an associate professor at the Law School of the University of Pittsburgh. He came to California Western in 1964 where he remained until his untimely death on November 16, 1996.

Professor Bob Meiners loved teaching and he loved the subjects he taught—Contracts, Labor Law, and Arbitration. He firmly believed, however, that a good teacher needs more than an academic knowledge of the subject matter. He put this belief into practice by serving as an arbitrator during his free time. Word of his skill, his integrity and his insight soon spread, and he became nationally known and much sought after by parties seeking fair resolution of their disputes. But the fame and lure of high income did not cause Bob Meiners to lose his focus on what was truly important to him—teaching law. The law school always came first. He believed that disciplined scholarship was of utmost importance in the training of a good lawyer. He therefore served for several years as faculty advisor to the Law Review. He commanded respect not only from his colleagues, but from the administration and staff as well. He will be sorely missed. Most of all he will be missed by the students of the future who will not even know how much they are missing.

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* Professor, California Western School of Law.



Robert G. Meiners
1928-1996
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The Law Review is pleased to dedicate this issue to Professor Robert G. Meiners, the first faculty advisor to the Law Review. Professor Meiners was the Law Review advisor from 1965 to 1976.

*Jan Stiglitz***

I first met Bob in 1979 when I interviewed for a teaching position at California Western School of Law. Since both he and I shared an interest in labor law, I was most anxious to meet him. I don't think he originally shared my enthusiasm since the first question he asked was whether I was planning on ever teaching the basic labor law course. Once I assured him that I wasn't interested in wresting his favorite course away from him, he was most cordial.

After I got my feet wet in the classroom and felt able to think about becoming a labor arbitrator, I sought Bob's advice. Mindful of his earlier reaction to my interest in labor law, I felt some trepidation. But Bob was extremely generous with his time and advice. He willingly shared all of his forms and checklists and talked extensively about the process of deciding cases and writing awards. And, thanks to Bob, when I got my first case I actually knew who had the burden of proof.

Bob spread the Cal Western name far and wide. Whenever I've attended a labor law symposium or dealt with labor attorneys and someone has learned that I taught at California Western, they always asked: "How is Bob Meiners doing?" Sadly, my answer will now have to change.

* * * * *

*Katherine Rosenberry****

We will all remember Robert Meiners differently. I will remember him as my intelligent, funny and compassionate friend, Bob.

It was obvious to me the first time I spoke with Bob that he was extremely bright. I also knew that he had a reputation for being one of the best professors at the school. I subsequently discovered that he had master's degree from Harvard, was a Sterling Fellow at Yale, wrote approximately 10 law review articles and 5 journal articles and contributed to a book on contract law. He was also the first advisor to the Law Review.

While I appreciated his intellect, I thoroughly enjoyed his humor. I remember an episode during my first year of teaching in 1978. As a brand new teacher, I was at the very bottom of the hierarchy. He was the most senior faculty member. He had a reputation for being a chauvinist and of course I could not let that pass without comment. I was too inexperienced to know the most junior faculty member should not comment on the most senior member being a chauvinist. Fortunately, Bob did not know that rule either.

** Professor, California Western School of Law.

*** Professor, California Western School of Law.

1978 was the period of the Equal Rights Amendment. I bought an ERA tee-shirt for Bob and wrote on the back of it, "We love you Bobby." I put it in his mailbox at school. Soon, I received the following note from him. "Dear Sister, keep the faith. I will meet you in the street for the next rally. And by the way, be sure and send me a note from wherever it is you will be teaching next year." We had a special bond after that.

I also remember sitting through numerous faculty meetings where his side comments would make me burst out laughing at the most inappropriate times. Remembering some of his comments and their delivery still make me smile.

Not only was he funny and bright, he was also compassionate and sentimental. He had a exterior of being gruff. But gruff Bob supported me when my son was very ill. I knew I could get a hug whenever I need it. This same gruff Bob cried through Penn Lerblance's memorial service. Gruff Bob also loved flowers and fed birds every night from his porch.

His sentimentality was brought home to me when I helped clean out his office. He still had a plaque I had made for him 17 years ago. The plaque said, "When God created Man, she was just kidding." The fact that he kept the plaque for all these years touched me.

I will miss Bob's intellect, his wit, his compassion, and even his stubbornness. My memories of him will always bring a warm smile to my face. He was a good guy.

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*Kylee D. Odette*****

The California Western Law Review began in 1965, just seven years after the law school held its first classes. The publication of the first Law Review was overseen by Professor Robert G. Meiners, its first faculty advisor. He had only been at the school for one year when he was asked to fill that role. Professor Meiners oversaw the first twelve volumes of the Review. When the Review was established, there were only twelve members on the faculty. Professor Meiners was the only one of the those faculty members to remain teaching until this year.

Professor Meiners taught Contracts, Labor Law and Arbitration. I will best remember him as my Contracts Professor. A self-proclaimed "sneaky, devious" professor, he enjoyed the first class period scaring us by using words like "consideration," "offer" and "acceptance." The last two did not appear too confusing, but that consideration concept was slippery. He kept referring to parties trading services for peppercorns. I never thought I would actually understand consideration. However, not only did I understand this

**** Executive Editor, *California Western Law Review*.

concept, but Contracts shortly became my favorite class, mostly because of Professor Meiners and the way he taught.

Professor Meiners liked to have fun in his class. Instead of merely calling on students at random, he would utilize the roll sheet to pick his “victims.” As the roll sheet was being passed around for the students to sign, Professor Meiners would lecture. When he was ready for a “victim,” he would make a hissing noise, warning the students that the “rattlesnake” was about to strike. The students would attempt to sign their names as quickly as possible and pass the roll sheet along so as to avoid being the “victim.” Not surprisingly, this created quite a frenzy. The student who held the roll sheet when Professor Meiners yelled, “and the rattlesnake strikes,” would have to answer his questions. This entire ordeal made the class tense, but at the same time it was fun (at least for the “non-victims”).

Through his stories and analogies, we learned contracts and a good time along the way. Whenever a case could have been decided the opposite way, he would always end the discussion with, “Well you pays your money, and you takes your chances.” I am extremely grateful to Professor Meiners for bringing levity to a difficult subject and to a difficult time in law school. I am only sorry that future students will not be able to experience contracts through those wonderfully “sneaky, devious” eyes.

Law Review is honored to dedicate this volume of the Review in Professor Meiners’ memory.

