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2005

A Tribute to Frederic L. Kirgis

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Recommended Citation

David K. Millon, *A Tribute to Frederic L. Kirgis*, 62 Wash. & Lee L. Rev. 842 (2005).

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has meant to this place. The joy for many years will be that Rick in the flesh will appear in that same corridor advising young colleagues and being a genuine friend to us.

Rick will continue to thrive. He has now completed his history of the American Society of International Law. Without pause, he will continue to add his brilliant, balanced, nuanced voice to that clamorous field—international law. His colleagues will be drawn in by the gravitational force of the quality of his work and obliged to set their efforts to his mark. As a dean, I am grateful for Rick's advice over my tenure here. A dean can have no better supporter or critic than one who has sat in the same chair and pondered problems defying rational solution. I am beholden to him for those years when he heeded the call of duty to become Dean. His achievements benefit us today and guide the future of this special place.

David Millon*

I met Rick Kirgis back in 1985, when the Association of American Law Schools's "meat market" for aspiring professors still occurred at an inhospitable hotel near the Chicago airport. Rick, as Dean, led the interview team representing the law school at Washington and Lee University. Having grown up in the Midwest and attended college, grad school, and law school there and in the Northeast, I knew nothing about this small university in a remote corner of Virginia. Its name struck me as incongruous, combining those of a great American military and political hero and the leader of the South's failed rebellion. Schoolchildren in the North learn little of Robert E. Lee than beyond Pickett's Charge and Appomattox. Certainly we were never told of his presidency of Washington College after the Civil War and his efforts to build an educational institution that would prepare southern youth for leadership in politics and the professions in the postwar Union. At least in 1985, Washington and Lee was not on the short list of institutions that northeasterners considered serious places of higher learning.

So, as a long and grueling day came to a close, I searched for the Washington and Lee interview suite with skepticism born of a northerner's ignorance and prejudices. The day had already offered a fairly bizarre range of

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experiences, including some in which my interrogators made no effort to hide their mutual antipathy and others in which they made no effort to hide their lack of serious interest in me. It was hard to feel enthusiastic. I was not so arrogant as to view this interview as a mere backup in case better opportunities fell through, but at the same time the chance of ending up at Washington and Lee seemed remote.

The interview changed all that. I cannot remember any details but I do recall coming away intrigued by this small, ambitious law school in a remote valley enchantingly named "Shenandoah." I was excited about a faculty that included people as friendly and quietly impressive as Rick and the other interviewers. Here was a dean with an international reputation as a scholar who had none of the arrogance or self-importance I had seen in my law school teachers and so many of the deans and professors I had met earlier that day. Here were a dean and two faculty colleagues who respected each other and enjoyed each other's company. Here were three successful academics who didn't feel the need to explain why they were at Washington and Lee rather than, say, Yale or Chicago.

In his calm, self-effacing way, Rick described the excitement and satisfaction of work at a small school that prided itself on teaching. Then, as now, the student body was tiny by law school standards. This, Rick emphasized, made it possible to teach small classes and to cultivate the kinds of close relationships with students that I knew from experience are hard to realize at larger law schools. He acknowledged that Washington and Lee's commitment to teaching could constrain scholarly achievement but spoke persuasively of the school's commitment to scholarship; there was no suggestion that being a "teaching school" was a code for minimal research and publication expectations. Rick and his colleagues also emphasized the natural beauty of the place and the virtues of small-town life for raising children. As much by his sincere manner and easy, friendly openness as by his words, he persuaded me that Washington and Lee's commitment to teaching could be rewarding and exciting. I was convinced that the law school could provide the right environment and support for an ambitious new professor aspiring to make a splash as a scholar. Rick also made it possible to imagine why someone might move his family from Boston to a small Southern town, just as Rick had moved with his family to Lexington from a major West Coast law school several years earlier.

Since then, I have often looked to Rick for guidance in my professional life. Sometimes I have simply gone to him for advice. Often as not, an easy smile turned into his toothy grin as I expressed my frustration with a wrong-headed colleague or a difficult student. He had the patience and the long view of a lifelong Cubs fan and the wisdom that comes from a fundamentally charitable outlook on humanity.

More often, though, Rick has taught me by his example. He is not a preachy person. Exhortation and criticism do not come naturally to him. He prefers to go quietly about his business, pouring enormous energy into teaching while continuing to produce important scholarship in several areas of international law. I have been especially impressed by his willingness year after year to teach Legal Writing to first-semester, first-year students. It is a particularly time-consuming kind of teaching. A scholar of Rick's stature might have insisted on teaching advanced, small-enrollment courses in his specialties, but Rick devoted many, many hours to marking papers and meeting with bewildered, often insecure first-year students. The workload was heavy, heavier than it would have been if he had complained and demanded relief, and there were certainly times when it taxed his natural cheerfulness. I think, though, that he embraced this labor not just because he believed he should do his share but mostly because he knew the value of his careful, patient attention to his students' development as lawyers.

For me, Rick's willingness to devote extraordinary time and energy to teaching while regularly producing scholarship of the highest quality exemplifies our aspirations as a faculty. His cheerful diligence and unwavering dedication to the best values of our law school have served as a constant reminder of what we should stand for, even as we are pulled by reputational pressures to spend more time writing and less time teaching. With his retirement we lose his quiet leadership. In his absence, I hope we do not lose our direction.

Blake D. Morant*

*A great [person] will find a great subject, or which is the same thing, make any subject great.*¹⁷

The legal academy has long acknowledged the seminal nature of the academic triad, the elements of which include teaching, scholarship, and

* Roy L. Steinheimer, Jr., Professor of Law and Director, Frances Lewis Law Center, Washington and Lee University School of Law. I express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Frederic Kirgis, whose career, counsel, and friendship continue to inspire and motivate me. I appreciate the research assistance provided by Joseph Dunn ('05 L) and Mrs. Terry Evans's clerical assistance. I also acknowledge Mrs. Paulette J. Morant whose constant support and patience contribute to all of my projects.

17. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals*, in THE INTERNATIONAL THESAURUS OF QUOTATIONS 561 (Rhonda Thomas Tripp ed., 1970).