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A Tribute to a Wonderful Human Being

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was the way David was. And we are grateful for every extra minute that his fighting spirit likely gave us. David set a shining example to all of us about how to live and how to die.

David never won a jackpot in Vegas. But he did in life. He had a wonderful wife, two super kids, and colleagues who loved him and saw in him all that was good. We all won the jackpot when David spent over twenty years as a beloved member of our Loyola family. I will aspire to be more like him the rest of my life.

*Professor Georgene M. Vairo*¹²

A Tribute to a Wonderful Human Being

We all knew his time was coming. Although he came to school every day, sat in on faculty candidate presentations, and continued to do his job, David was beginning to fade from us. It was just a matter of time. And, his time did come, February 10, 2010. Two days later, a blog was started to provide his students, colleagues and friends a place to remember his gentle soul. When preparing this tribute, I checked the blog again. There were posts by his faculty colleagues as well as members of the Loyola staff. Having been David's colleague, I expected the outpouring of love and respect conveyed in these posts. I also expected similar sentiments to be expressed by his students. We all knew what a great teacher he was. But David obviously touched all of his students in ways that he touched me and my colleagues. There were countless entries from his students.

Words like compassion, humor, kindness, and humility all found their way into these posts on David's memorial blog. I would like to add another: inspiration. David inspired me, and from what one can see in the posts by his students, he inspired countless Loyola graduates. And, his inspiring touch made me, and I am confident anyone whom he touched, to become a better human being.

12. Professor of Law and William M. Rains Fellow, Loyola Law School Los Angeles.

When I arrived at Loyola in the summer of 1995, I thought that I would be in Los Angeles for only a year. I was open to staying, but as a diehard New Yorker, I just knew that L.A. would not be for me. Upon arriving at Loyola, however, I was immediately embraced, and one of the people who made me feel the most welcome was David Leonard. His smile and warmth seemed to characterize Loyola, and his quiet intelligence and wit, all made me think again about whether returning to New York was what I really wanted to do. Feeling like I was in a great new family, I decided to stay. Once the reality hit, I wondered whether I had made the right decision. Having lived in New York for most of my life, and having had a wonderful career at Fordham Law School, I wondered how my life's journey would evolve; what would my new life look like.

I heard an ad for the California AIDS Ride soon after deciding to stay at Loyola. I vigorously prepared to ride in the 1996 California AIDS Ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. I was one among thousands who did the ride. It was an incredible experience. I was first blown away by the amazing generosity of the entire Loyola community supporting my fundraising. David was one of the first to write a nice check. After the ride, I wrote a thank you note to the community telling them about the experience. I told them about how the Ride had made me think about service to others; how I wanted to give more in anonymous ways. The response I got from David Leonard transformed me and to this day has inspired me to make sure that I continue to serve in a quiet, faceless way.

Last fall, when David was really beginning to fail, I reminded him of the exchange we had at that time. Here is what I wrote to him, and then his response:

G to D: "I will never forget the note you sent me after I wrote an e-mail to the faculty after I did the AIDS Ride the first time. You made me feel like a really good person for all the right reasons. It made me want to stay the course in terms of how I would try to contribute to the world from then on. I have always felt that you get me in ways that a lot of people don't. Just want you to know that I will be eternally grateful to you for that."

D to G: "That is one of the most wonderful things anyone's ever said to me. I really mean it. Thank you so much."

A simple story and a simple statement that epitomized who David is. David just knew how to make all of us feel special and make us live our lives as better persons. I miss him and being able to talk to him about the life, law and Loyola, but he will live on in all of us.

*Professor Anita Bernstein*¹³

"A Little Happier": David Leonard as Co-Author

Around the time of David's death, the acclaimed film critic Roger Ebert wrote an entry in his journal. Ebert, left unable to speak or eat or drink from complications of thyroid cancer, had been contemplating human existence. His wife appeared with him on the Oprah Winfrey show and read his words aloud:

I believe at the end of it all, if we have done something to make others a little happier and ourselves a little happier that is about the best we can do. To make others less happy is a crime, to make ourselves unhappy is where all crime starts.

We should try to contribute joy to our world. That is true. No matter what our health circumstances are we should try. I didn't always know this, but I'm happy I lived long enough to find out.¹⁴

David Leonard, who did not live nearly long enough, nevertheless did have time to find out what Roger Ebert had suffered to learn. He lived the ideal of "mak[ing] others a little happier" more than anyone else I have known. I write recalling a six-year work relationship: David and I co-authored two editions of a study aid called *Torts: Questions and Answers*. My time with David was a

13. Anita and Stuart Subotnick Professor of Law, Brooklyn Law School.

14. Emily Friedman, *Film Critic Roger Ebert Discusses His Cancer and His 'Happy Life,'* ABC NEWS, Mar. 2, 2010, <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/roger-ebert-cheerfully-talks-oprah-winfrey/story?id=9987483>.