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LETTER TO WILLIAM JOSEPH LANDERS

*Anita E. Ruud**

Dear William,

The Law Review is dedicating an issue to you and your memory. What in the world can I tell them about you, about our extraordinary friendship and how I miss you so?

I remember when we first met. It was in the spring of 1974, the end of first year, and I was studying for finals with my pal, Daneen Flynn. You poked your head into our studying, and we were introduced. Later on, we had lunch at nearby Lawry's where we discussed whether or not you should take out another law student. As I remember, we discussed strategy on asking her out. The two of you then went out for many years, and she was your last girlfriend.

Our last year of law school, you were appointed Editor-in-Chief and were thoroughly absorbed by the whole thing (it was certainly your way to throw yourself totally into any job that you took on). I had written-on to Law Review that year, and you saved my article by a marvelous editing job.

During the last years of law school we had become fast friends and routinely double-dated with my law school boyfriend. The four of us did almost everything together: we danced in the streets singing "You Gotta Have Heart"; played like kids at Disneyland; took trips to your family's house in Palm Springs; and took that crazy trip to San Francisco where we all slept in the tiny one-room apartment of a friend in Berkeley. We went to what we all thought then was the poshest restaurant around San Francisco, Ernie's, and thought we were all so chic and sophisticated to order Poully Fuisse wine with our meal. We had that crazy slumber party at your house where we slept on the floor of your apartment after watching faithfully the original Saturday Night Live, which we did for many years thereafter.

Slowly your life began to change as you realized that your life would not consist of a standard family with a wife and children. We spent a lot of time together as you slowly "came out." We went to nightclubs and danced, and both of us checked out the cute guys. We went roller skating on the beach boardwalk near my home in Santa Monica; you fell and broke your arm. We discussed your work, your friends and your family

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and how they might react to your new life. Your family became the hardest obstacle, but slowly over the years the communications opened up, especially after you became ill. Your mother and your sisters were at your side when you died.

After our frolicking in Los Angeles, I moved to Northern California and you hung out in the back seat of my Volkswagen convertible, catching rays while helping me move. I considered having you as one of my attendants at my wedding the next year, but I settled for having you do a reading instead. In true Landers fashion, you did the flowers magnificently for my reception. You became good friends with my husband.

I then moved to Washington, D.C. On your first visit with me in D.C., you slept on the floor in the same room as my husband and me in our one-room apartment. The three of us drove around the Capitol and other D.C. monuments, all nicely lit at night and hummed "America the Beautiful."

We visited each other frequently, dressed to kill and went to chic restaurants in Washington, New York and Los Angeles. We were dangerous in a shopping mall together, as we both loved to shop, loved to dress, loved to decorate our homes, loved to advise each other on dress and decor, and loved to play. You had an extraordinary surprise thirtieth birthday party for me at your apartment. My fortieth birthday comes soon and your absence will be felt. Because of your interest in all things: music, theatre, movies, books, travel, your work and people in general, you were always my favorite person to invite to a dinner party (and you certainly always helped decorate the house for such a party, too).

You finally moved to Washington, D.C., and then I had the temerity to move back to California. Our phone calls continued and we still visited, but not as often as we would have liked. You became a good friend to my eldest daughter, and my children called you "Uncle Bill."

Your work in Washington, especially the White House, absorbed you completely for a while, and you were difficult to reach. Then word came of your illness. I was devastated; you were determined to be hopeful. As each new disease began its onslaught, you continued to fight each one with the same energy you put to every task you mastered.

We visited the best we could. I went to D.C. last summer to take care of you for a few days and to fatten you up a little. You rallied and were able to travel quite a bit the first half of this year, including a trip to San Francisco over the New Year's holiday. I had planned to visit you this October to take care of you again, but had to fly to Washington for the funeral in September instead. I learned at the funeral that the special

relationship we had, the “true companion” nature of our relationship, was something you had in common with others as well, because of your incredible diversity and wonderful energy.

I miss you, Billy.

Much love,
Anita