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WALTER TRINKAUS, FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE

*Martha S. Robinson**

As an emeritus professor, Walter Trinkaus continued his interest and work in the fields of law that were his specialties: remedies, professional ethics, and family law. With office space for new faculty members at a premium, the emeritii were relegated to an isolated and depressing niche on the first floor of the Rains building. Quietly, with characteristic lack of fuss, Walter found a more congenial work space in the Faculty library, moved his books and papers onto one of the tables and a carrel, and there he stayed with no one wishing—or daring—to suggest that he do otherwise.

I retired from teaching the year after Walter did and turned to activities other than the law, but on the various occasions when I returned to the law school, it was always heartening and good to find Walter at his post in the library. Always he had a word of friendly greeting, a funny story to tell, a trenchant comment on some aspect of law or its practitioners. He had successfully practiced law for many years before his move into full-time teaching and had acquired a clear, sophisticated knowledge of what was done and of those who did it. Not that he was ever mean or a gossip; rather his comments were insightful or amusing, and often both.

Through the years that Walter and I were members of the full-time faculty, we often discussed legal problems raised by new cases and texts in the subjects we both taught, and I felt more than fortunate to be able to draw upon his wisdom and astute perceptions. We also frequently talked about our families, about his two daughters, both of whom I know to be beautiful and caring, and especially about his grandchildren of whom he was extremely proud. My grandchildren were only a little younger than his. Often we traded stories about their respective sayings, doings, and their extraordinary (to us) achievements. I think Walter's grands may have had a slight edge over mine, he having four to my two, but it was a keen rivalry, and close.

Walter was one of the most disciplined people I ever knew. Having decided to stop smoking, he simply stopped, and those elegant

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slim cigars he favored were never seen again. When he began a regimen of physical fitness at the downtown athletic club, nothing was allowed to interfere with his regular work-outs. "When you make a commitment to something," he once told me, "you have to carry through with it no matter what." When his vision was impaired so that he no longer drove a car, he walked from his apartment on Bunker Hill to the law school every day. One day, knowing that he had just recovered from a severe bout of the flu but nevertheless walked the entire distance to teach his classes, several of us remonstrated with him. His response was typical Walter. "You can't just sit around and wait to get better," he said.

In fact, many things tended to get better if Walter took a hand in guiding them. During the turbulent late sixties when it was not uncommon for classes and student government groups to be disrupted by students outraged at some perceived injustice, Walter's calm and moderate counsel was invaluable. A few years later he undertook significant obligations in connection with the new nationwide Right To Life organization. But always, his activity was conducted with moderation and generosity. The extremists never had his approval or assistance. His special strength was in logical persuasion, and as an excellent speaker he engaged in quiet, often most effective debate with those of the opposite view. At the same time he never allowed the polemics to enter his classroom, but continued to teach family law with scholarly objectivity.

In spite of all the workouts and commitments to good health, illness finally put an end to Walter's legal work in the library at the law school. I am certain that this was a calamity for him, but there was never a word of complaint. The last time I spoke with him, when his family and friends, and he too, knew that he was desperately ill, he was full of a cheerful interest in all sorts of things—the political scene, the grandchildren, my new book, who was doing what at the law school and in the legal arena. I hung up the telephone painfully aware that I could not expect such a conversation to occur again. Walter's friendship had been a gift I valued greatly. It was hard to have to relinquish it.