



Case Western Reserve Law Review

Volume 67 | Issue 1

2016

Tribute To Professor Ken Margolis

Mathew J. Rossman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/caselrev>

Recommended Citation

Mathew J. Rossman, *Tribute To Professor Ken Margolis*, 67 Case W. Res. L. Rev. 9 (2016)

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/caselrev/vol67/iss1/6>

This Tribute is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Journals at Case Western Reserve University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Case Western Reserve Law Review by an authorized administrator of Case Western Reserve University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

his dedication to our law school, to his students, his clients, his colleagues, and the legal profession.

Matthew J. Rossman[†]

RENAISSANCE MAN

A multi-talented fellow, Ken Margolis had his choice of many careers. Music was an obvious one. Ken was a teenage musical prodigy and keyboard player for The Choir, one of Cleveland's most well-known 1960s rock bands.¹ Along with its own impressive collection of hits, The Choir served as a launching pad for musicians who would go on to national fame as members of other groups, most notably The Raspberries and The James Gang.² Ken certainly had his own opportunities to make music his livelihood. But he has been content (until now) with it as a sideline that has kept local audiences, including many of his students and colleagues, thoroughly entertained.

Applied mathematics was another option. Going against the grain of a profession which often proclaims to be "not good with numbers," Ken reveled in every opportunity to incorporate mathematics into legal practice. Seeking to show students in his Focused Problem Solving course the many tools a lawyer might employ to aid a client in arriving at a decision on a complicated matter, Ken developed an interactive, user-friendly chart laying out the client's objectives and options on X and Y axes. By working with a client to numerically weight each of his or her objectives, a lawyer could help the client see which options best accomplished the most important of these objectives. As Co-Director of our public interest law firm, the Milton A. Kramer Law Clinic Center, Ken developed a formula for calculating full-time equivalent students to balance our teaching loads. Less famously, he devised an elaborate system for dividing the lunch bill at our quarterly firm birthday lunches

[†] Professor of Law/Attorney at Law Milton A. Kramer Law Clinic Center.

1. See, e.g., CARLO WOLFF, CLEVELAND ROCK & ROLL MEMORIES: TRUE AND TALL TALES OF THE GLORY DAYS 60-64 (2006).
2. Anyone wishing to research the frequently changing membership of The Choir and all of the bands from and to which its members came and went should consult The Choir Family Tree on the wall of Dave's Cosmic Subs, 1842 Coventry Rd, Cleveland Heights, OH 44106. While there, I invite you to try The Crazy Dave™, a bag of Dirty Chips, and a homemade Dave's Root Beer. There is no finer lunch.

that allocated discounted shares of the bill to those who had indeed had a birthday in the preceding quarter.³

I could go on and on, shining a light on Ken's skills as an office solutions expert,⁴ Buddhist spiritual retreat director, and snowplow operator. My point is that we are so fortunate that Ken chose instead to dedicate his career to teaching law students how to practice law. Ken's calling to this profession actually came while he was still a law student in the mid-1970s. Ken and some of his law school classmates met with sympathetic professors and developed recommendations for making legal education at his alma mater, Case Western Reserve University School of Law, more relevant to legal practice.

Little did Ken know that what at the time was idealistic advocacy would become a lifelong vocation! In 1984, after eight years in private practice, Case Western hired Ken to teach in its emerging law clinic. He was hired on a one-year contract and given an office in the maid's quarters of a dilapidated old mansion across the street from the law school, which perhaps symbolically reflected clinical legal education's standing at the time. Over the decades to come, Ken was instrumental in solidifying the notion of legal skills training not as an afterthought, but as a central part of Case Western's law school curriculum and of clinical law faculty not as easily fungible lawyers on break from practice, but as equally vested and respected participants in the enterprise of legal education.

My part of the story picks up in 2004, when I arrived at Case Western a few years into my teaching career. At this stage, Case Western was becoming a trendsetter among law schools in its approach to teaching lawyering skills. Ken was the lead architect of the newly-adopted CaseArc program, which combined four mandatory, sequenced skills-oriented courses over the first two years of the law school curriculum, followed by the option of one or more real practice capstone experiences (externships, labs, and clinics). Moreover, Ken had worked intentionally and carefully to enlist more traditional, "doctrinal" faculty in the endeavor by using simulations for the CaseArc course sequence that would tie directly to material covered in their courses. CaseArc was soon a national model for how to fully integrate skills training into a law school curriculum, and schools and conferences from across the country were inviting Ken to come and speak about how he had made it happen.

Rather than rest on his laurels, Ken continued to push. He advocated strategically and effectively for the creation of a tenure track for

3. Ken, years later we used your formula to re-calculate the third quarter 2008 birthday lunch bill and, as suspected, found you shorted us \$3.15. Please remit promptly to yours truly.

4. His carefully crafted combination of paper clips and sticky notes to keep the top drawer on his desk from continually sliding open was particularly inventive and worthy of patent consideration.

clinic faculty in order to ensure that the law school could recruit and retain high quality clinicians in a changing marketplace. He worked as well to increase the number of clinical and externship offerings available to students as capstone placements, although he did so selectively with an eye toward only adding high quality experiences that would not undermine our pedagogic goals. When the time came for Case Western to again lead the pack and create an Associate Dean for Experiential Education, Ken was the obvious and universally acclaimed choice to fill the position.

A highly-regarded teacher, writer, and speaker, Ken is the quint-essential Renaissance Man. But above all his many accomplishments in the field of clinical legal education, I've yet to mention why we, his colleagues at the Milton A. Kramer Law Clinic Center, admire him most. It is for his qualities as a colleague and friend. Ken's door was truly always open. As someone who co-taught and co-managed a clinic with him for over a decade, I can attest to how supportive he was in and out of the classroom. Although his clinical teaching experience clearly dwarfed mine when I arrived, he immediately made me feel like an equal participant in our collective enterprise. It is this same approach that made him so popular with students. He conveyed deep engagement in and openness to the opinions of all he worked with and, in return, received their best performance and enduring respect.

We wish Ken all the best in retirement and in every other endeavor to which he devotes his considerable talents. Rock on!