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Roland J. Stanger: An Appreciation

On the death of such a person as Roland Stanger, to whom so many have been deeply attached, the pervading sense of loss can bring an impulse to communicate with others and share with them the sources and meaning of the ties that have been severed. When the editors of the Indiana Law Journal asked me to serve, in a sense, as spokesman for them and for others, I was honored by the request and most willing to make the attempt, difficult though it is certain to be. For a person as complex as Roland Stanger must have made different impressions on different people. So I have no more than a hope that I can speak for others in trying to describe a friendship that has extended over the past 45 years.

He graduated from the University of Michigan Law School in 1934 and then practiced in New York City for five years. I saw him often during that time on his visits to his family in Ann Arbor, Michigan. His experience in New York practice he enjoyed at the time and valued in retrospect. It confirmed the disposition of his own mind, which was skeptical and constantly probing but did not reach out to and stay long suspended at the highest levels of speculation. His interest became actively engaged when he confronted problems that were invested with some immediacy because they rose directly from experience and called for practical and workable solutions. If the problems were complex and the solutions hard to find, all the better. He had the capacities and staying power that would have made him, I believe, a highly successful practitioner. But he wanted more than this, some purposes that he could pursue consistently, with an ordered plan and the prospect of greater usefulness than could come through service to clients. For among his motives there was at work, then and later, a strong component of idealism, about which he was extremely reticent, as he was to all other private matters. So in 1939 he decided to try teaching. He spent one year at Western Reserve and two years at Ohio State, only enough for a good start but also enough to convince him that this was the course he would follow. Then came the war.

He signed up first with the Office of Price Administration and then transferred to one of the agencies that was to become part of the Foreign Economic Administration. During most of this time we roomed together in Washington. One of the functions of the Foreign Economic Administration was to participate, jointly with British authorities, in administering controls over shipping and supplies for the civilian populations of the Middle East, mainly to ensure their adequacy. The Middle East Supply Center had its headquarters in Cairo. It had eighteen countries in and around the Middle East for whose essential needs it tried to provide. Rollie joined the American economic mission in Cairo in 1944 and I arrived soon thereafter. In due course he became its assistant director. The Supply Center itself was one of numerous joint ventures that were improvised by the allies for the conduct of the war and that required close and trusting co-operation in the formulation of policy and in many management decisions. There was also an enormous amount to learn very quickly about 18 countries whose cultures, social organization and economic resources varied so enormously. Great care was required in all dealings with leaders in those countries whose experience and purposes differed so greatly from our own. It was a strenuous time in which, among other things, the participants took the measure of each other. For Rollie it brought an enlargement of horizons and a lasting interest in the objectives and means of international co-operation.

After his return to this country in 1945 Rollie was to have not much more than one year to practice his chosen vocation. President Truman proposed in the spring of 1947 a program of American aid to Greece and Turkey, which a year later was merged with the Marshall plan for aid to western Europe. It was aid to Greece that was overwhelmingly urgent. Greece had been devastated by the Germans and then by a civil war conducted by well-supplied communist armies, a war that drove much of the population into the cities to starve. Included in the plan for aid to Greece was a proposal that a position be created, within the Greek Government, of administrator of foreign trade, a position that could be held by an American. His concurrence would be required (i.e., he would have a veto) as to any regulation, export or import license or other governmental action affecting foreign trade. Our wartime work in the Middle East must have been the reason why some one in Washington thought of us. So we went, I as administrator and Rollie as my deputy. We confided to each other later that we both were sure we would not come back. It was as different as could be from the work in the Middle East. We did not become involved in estimates of the supplies that Greece would require to meet its basic needs. There was an American mission, very able and well informed, that could work out those broad issues with Greek officials. Our main function was to meet the people of Greece, all those who wanted to import something. It often seemed that everyone in Greece wanted to import something. For many the needs were real enough. Rollie and I divided the list of importable commodities roughly by two and each took half. Sometimes we could find new solutions for particular problems.

There was much to explain, to people at every level of Greek society. There is no use trying to describe this indescribable experience except to say that it did not take either of us very long to fall in love with Greece and especially with the Greeks, so superbly intelligent, passionate but, even when very angry, so highly civilized. Indeed he really fell in love with one particular Greek, an intelligent, perceptive and graceful lady who had given indispensable aid as his interpreter and then became his wife.

There is a small problem, I think, in explaining Rollie's success in dealing with people of other nationalities in those two very different settings, Cairo and Greece. For his manner could hardly be described as ingratiating. If he made an effort to please, any signs of the effort were seldom visible. On the contrary, his responses were very often brusque and they could be rough indeed if he detected in another some calculated deception or guile. I have never known anyone who could say no in a more convincing way. It is fairly easy to understand how our British colleagues in Cairo developed toward him both confidence and good will, for they had opportunities over stretches of time to observe the clarity and force of his mind and also his warmth and responsiveness in close personal relations. In Greece, on the other hand, he met thousands of people, usually very briefly, to give most of them bad news. A few became very angry. Most did not.

I surmise that the reasons were essentially those that were to play a part later in his relations with students, of which I have heard much by third and fourth hand. He spoke plainly, sometimes bluntly. But one can accept plain speaking when it is evident that the speaker is unable to dissemble or equivocate, that he must say what he believes, without animus or arrogance but also without trimmings. And plain speaking becomes reassuring, as total honesty tends to be, if an opportunity then is given to reach behind the firm control that he maintained over expression of his emotions to discover the warmth, kindness and genuine concern for others that lay hidden beneath the surface. In his later years of teaching these qualities became directed increasingly toward his students and provided for him a constant and strong motivation. The many signs that his affection and respect were returned in full by many of them gave him his greatest reward.

He continued to teach at Ohio State until 1971, when he retired and was appointed to the faculty of Indiana University Law School. There had been two interludes, one at the Naval War College for the year 1958-1959 and the other at Haile Selassie I University in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for two years, 1965-1967. In both he taught primarily international law. At the War College he became engrossed in a topic that he had previously written about. He was enabled to complete an extended study of agreements on the status of forces, regulating conduct of military personnel when stationed in the territory of friendly nations with their consent. The stay in Ethiopia turned out to be another major adventure. He was one of a group of American law teachers who had been invited to join in creating a new law school in

Ethiopia. He found his students and most of the Ethiopians that he met interesting and most compatible. He travelled extensively over the country. In his teaching he strove to adapt the materials he used to the interests and needs of his auditors. For example, he took as both an initial and a recurring theme the international law that could be used to determine the disputed boundary between Ethiopia and Somalia, an issue that has since brought resort to war. This two-year stay, longer than he had intended, widened still further the range of his interests so that central and eastern Africa became a primary subject of his concern.

His published writings all dealt with problems that are regulated, if they are regulated at all, by international agreements and international law. His writings all show the same qualities of clarity, directness and economy in expression, so that it would be difficult to find one wasted word. The questions he dealt with all involved controls imposed or planned by one country that would be likely to have abrasive or seriously provocative effects on the interests of others, so that accommodations and agreed operating procedures were very much needed. My own favorite among these studies was an analysis in 1956 of the objectives and machinery of foreign exchange control. It was an expert treatment of an extremely complex and disorderly subject. It showed how familiar he was with both the economics and the working procedures in the financing of international transactions. A study as good as this produces in the reader some regret that he did not write more like it. But I think his self-criticism was too rigorous for him to enjoy the struggle to meet his own standards. His friends can testify how rigorous his criticism was, for he rendered them great service. As for myself, everything I have written for many years has been subjected to his "acid bath." He has, I believe, improved the product but, more than this, he has also given me a message as he has to thousands of others. The message is to think until you really know what you think and then to say it as simply and directly as you can.

Those who knew Roland Stanger well learned much more than this. They learned that rigor sustained in the continuing effort to clarify thought can be combined with generosity, humanity, and deep concern for others. They also learned the value of total honesty despite the risks it may bring and were grateful for the example he gave of unwavering fidelity to the principles and the persons he believed in.

He died on April 12, 1978, aged 68.

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