

1991

A Tribute to Bernard Becker

Trudell H. Guerue Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: <http://open.mitchellhamline.edu/wmlr>

Recommended Citation

Guerue, Trudell H. Jr. (1991) "A Tribute to Bernard Becker," *William Mitchell Law Review*: Vol. 17: Iss. 2, Article 7.
Available at: <http://open.mitchellhamline.edu/wmlr/vol17/iss2/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Reviews and Journals at Mitchell Hamline Open Access. It has been accepted for inclusion in William Mitchell Law Review by an authorized administrator of Mitchell Hamline Open Access. For more information, please contact sean.felhofer@mitchellhamline.edu.

© Mitchell Hamline School of Law

A TRIBUTE TO BERNARD BECKER

TRUDELL H. GUERUE, JR. †

At a cold and early hour on January 2, 1991, a friend telephoned to tell me that Bernie had died. For me, as for many others, the sense of great personal loss was immediate and painful. This was as painful, to me, as the death of my father.

As time has passed and the pain has eased, I have become aware that the true loss has been to society. Bernie is no longer at William Mitchell College of Law. No more classes of law students will learn civil procedure, Indian Law and the art of lawyering from him. Lawyers will no longer have the opportunity to practice in front of him. They will not have the pleasure of legal and intellectual discussion with the brilliant, kind, gentle and fair judge that Bernie was.

We American Indians have suffered a loss that, in some ways, is even greater. Not only is Bernie not here to fight for tribes and individual Indians, he is no longer here to impart his irreplaceable knowledge of the morass that is Indian law to future lawyers. Bernie was a lance as he battled to enforce the rights of Indians, and he was a shield as he continued to fight to protect those rights. It will be a long time before another Bernie comes along and each moment is one of danger for our tribes and reservations. Perhaps some of you, who had the good fortune to study Indian law with Bernie, will continue the fight.

I sent an eagle feather with Bernie on his westward journey. No warrior had a greater right to wear such a feather. An eagle feather symbolizes truth. There have been few who cared more than Bernie for the truth. The eagle feather also symbolizes courage, and Bernie epitomized that as he advocated for the unpopular, the poor, the Indians. And it stands for generosity, and, again, Bernie wonderfully illustrated that virtue. With his lawyering skills, knowledge and personality, Bernie could have been a wealthy man. Instead, he looked after the

† Former law clerk of Magistrate Becker, 1987-1988. Presently in the Social Security Administration Office of Hearings and Appeals.

rights and concerns of the downtrodden, the unfortunate, the helpless.

All of us, yes, that includes you judges and professors of law, can no longer go to that vast, wide-ranging library stored in Bernie's mind for advice that was as sound as any other and better than most. Wisdom like that will be more difficult to find.

I am not alone when I say, Kola, I miss you. You taught me far more than the law.