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A Tribute to Robert L. Oakley: Remembering Bob Oakley

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Remembering Bob Oakley

Duncan Alford*

¶1 I first met Bob at a South Carolina Library Association meeting in 1999, shortly after I started library school. I was practicing corporate law and going to library school part-time. Bob happened to be attending this conference. We talked briefly there in Hilton Head, and he invited me to stop by Georgetown for a visit if I was ever in Washington.

¶2 About a year later, I was visiting Washington with my wife and children, and I took Bob up on his offer. Bob, Peggy Fry, and I had a pleasant lunch and conversation that spring in Washington, D.C. As others have mentioned, Bob was especially welcoming to those new to the librarian profession.

¶3 I ran into Bob again when I attended my first AALL meeting in Minneapolis. Bob was president of AALL then and very busy with presidential duties during that meeting. Nevertheless, he spied me at the Minnesota Convention Center and walked over with a friendly greeting, another example of a warm gesture Bob made for those new to law librarianship.

¶4 Our paths crossed again when I had the privilege of serving on the staff at the Georgetown Law Library from 2004 to 2006. Bob allowed me and others there a great deal of autonomy to pursue our ideas on library service, and I thoroughly enjoyed working with the great team of professionals Bob had assembled at Georgetown.

¶5 When I departed Georgetown, Bob was gracious beyond belief. His wise counsel and generous support were genuine gifts for which I will be forever grateful.

Steven P. Anderson**

¶6 Professor Robert L. Oakley, known as Bob to most of us, was an advocate, a visionary, a leader, and a mentor. Rarely has anyone in the profession of law librarianship accomplished so much and assisted so many in such a relatively short time. He left the library profession with an outstanding legacy of service.

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¶7 I knew Bob most as my mentor. He challenged me—and I think all of us who knew him—to ask the difficult questions about law librarianship: How does a law library preserve digital content? What is the best balance between an author’s compensation and the public’s use of an author’s work? How should the American Association of Law Libraries work with the legal information vendor community to improve both the stream and cost-effectiveness of the scholarly communications process? What does the future hold for law librarians and law librarianship? Indeed, Bob had an uncanny knack for drawing his colleagues into these questions, but without making himself the center of attention. He often galvanized and motivated us with gentle, but persuasive thoughts from the sidelines. His calmness, paired with his remarkable intellect, made him, in my eyes, the ideal mentor.

¶8 I met Bob for the first time in March 1996 at a meeting of the Law Library Association of Maryland, during which he gave a presentation on “vendor neutral” citation issues. Fresh out of law school, I was amazed that anyone—let alone a professor at Georgetown University Law School—would so intensely analyze the situation or care so passionately about it. More importantly, Bob’s enthusiasm for such an esoteric topic made me realize, perhaps for the first time, that a law librarian’s professional role included advocacy on behalf of both the information itself and its users. The law, in fact, depended on law librarians to ensure that information in the flow of scholarly communication actually reached its intended audience. I was thrilled that an exemplary library leader viewed the practice of law librarianship so expansively. I enrolled in library school not long afterwards.

¶9 My path crossed Bob’s on a number of occasions in the following decade as my career progressed and my involvement with AALL increased. As a relatively young chair of the AALL Copyright Committee, I relied almost completely on his analysis of copyright law and his insights into information policy. I quickly found that Bob enjoyed a boundless capacity to believe that law librarianship could be a force for changing society for the better. Opportunities for positive transformation were present around every corner; it was incumbent upon all of us in the profession to avail ourselves of any potential opening. Bob, often with his assistant in the AALL Washington Affairs Office, Mary Alice Baish, never let a chance pass unnoticed. They wrote letters to members of Congress, filed *amicus curiae* briefs in appellate court cases, convened symposia and, significantly, communicated the importance of this strategic work back to librarians in many types of libraries.

¶10 More recently, as a member of the AALL Executive Board, I grew to appreciate Bob’s wisdom and tact all the more. Only lately did I come to understand how deeply rooted Bob’s advocacy network was. He informed the Board about his contacts with, and the developments in, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the National Archives and Records Administration, the United States Government Printing Office (USGPO), the National Information Standards Organization, and countless other entities. Furthermore, he was able to translate these complex, multifaceted advancements into terms and concepts easily appreciated by the rest of us. He also could take the lessons and ideas learned in one area and transfer them to

another field for implementation. In Bob's mind, if an institution such as the USGPO could embark on a mission to permanently preserve digital information, then that was a noble goal and "best practice" for libraries, too.

¶11 Bob's vision of law librarianship drove him to take risks—a proclivity shared by all gifted leaders. Happily, because of his knowledge, wit, and farsightedness, many of his projects enlarged the boundaries of the profession and increased librarians' skills. I recently had the good fortune to work with Bob and his colleagues at the Law Library at Georgetown University Law School and the Virginia State Law Library on a venture coordinated with the Legal Information Preservation Alliance. The "Chesapeake Project,"¹ a pilot endeavor to use OCLC's "Digital Archive" platform for archiving digital copies of government materials in the public domain, would never have started without his commitment, guidance, and assurance. Bob believed that if valuable information was contained in a digital format, then it was up to libraries to preserve that information, regardless of the media on which it was housed. Few technological hurdles were too great for Bob and his staff to leap.

¶12 Through all of this, of course, Bob was a leader and a mentor in a quiet, consensual, and even self-effacing manner. Meeting Bob in the airport for one of my first Board meetings in Chicago, I was impressed that he was taking the train downtown, instead of opting for the comfort and privacy of a cab. In spite of his stature and renown in the field, he was not "above" me or any other law librarian. This, perhaps more than any other factor, made his insights and advocacy valued by so many. It is the reason for the rich legacy he left the profession.

¶13 One of my fondest recollections of working with Bob was attending with him the inaugural meeting of AALL's "Gen X/Gen Y" Caucus on July 9, 2006. The group was formed in order to publicize the needs and issues of younger law librarians, a cause in which he believed ardently. Bob was one of the only librarians of an older generation to attend. His presence did not go unobserved, of course, as older gentlemen in this group were somewhat conspicuous. When Caucus Chair Jennifer Marshall began to conclude the meeting, she asked the group where it was headed, where it wanted to go, and what projects it wanted to undertake. Bob spoke up for the first time from the side of the room. His own words, with a touch of irony, best sum up his outlook on law librarianship and his means for understanding the complexity of the profession around him:

I tried to sit in the corner where I wouldn't be noticed, but anyway. . . . I'm sorry to report that I guess I'm a member of the "Baby Boom Generation," and I'm not going anywhere for a while. However, I do have several positions open at the moment. Those might be of interest to you. I just wanted to say a couple things. One is, I came here to learn. I came here to learn from you guys because I really believe that you guys are—or should be—

1. See Legal Information Archive, The Chesapeake Project, http://www.aallnet.org/committee/lipa/Chesapeake_Project.asp (last visited Jan. 28, 2008).

where the action is in our profession. Because as I said to some of your colleagues, you're going to be defining the future of our profession for the next generation. And I want to hear from you about what that is because I want to work with you in making that happen. And so I'm really interested to be here, to learn from you, and learn what your key issues are. What I'd like to hear—I don't know if people want to talk about it—is what are you thinking about, about the future of law librarianship? The future of law libraries—what are law libraries going to look like? When you become a director, what kind of a law library are you going to inherit?²

¶14 Another attendee interrupted: “There won't be a law library director.” Bob, of course, took the comment in stride:

Well, see, there's an interesting question. I'm interested in what that vision is that you guys hold for the future of law libraries and law librarianship. Now if you just sort of find a way of getting back to the question you just posed, I think that's a question that could be for discussion on the listserv or for a program for next year because I bet I'm not alone among my generation in wanting to tap into the energy and the thinking of this group about where this is all going.³

¶15 Undeniably, Bob Oakley left an extraordinary legacy by which we have been made stronger, more aware, and more responsible. He was an advocate, a visionary, a leader and a mentor—roles we likewise now are called to play.

Laura A. Bédard*

¶16 In 1983, barely a year after Bob Oakley became Law Library Director at Georgetown, I was a green and very young librarian, with no experience in legal materials. I had a background in rare books and history, and that seemed to be enough for him to take a chance on me. I have stayed at Georgetown over the years for a variety of reasons, but by far the most important one was Bob's vision of what law librarianship was and could be. He continually made my work interesting—he kept teaching me and insisted on creating a law library that in all its parts truly served the Law Center, the university, the legal community, and the world.

¶17 He had a deep appreciation for rare books and their importance not only for legal history, but in today's complex legal world. He was always thrilled to learn of lawyers and scholars alike coming to use the rare books we collected; he told me that we needed to acquire unique books and manuscripts that would be useful for today's legal issues and that would as well support the Law Center faculty scholarship. He did not want to have these rare materials sit in a vault, gather-

2. The audio portion of the meeting is available at Check This Out! Podcast, Episode 036: GenX GenY Caucus (July 15, 2006), http://cto.libsyn.com/index.php?post_id=110464.

3. *Id.*

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ing dust. “We are not a museum,” Bob would often quip wryly to me. “We want these rare books to be perused and studied.” In these last few years, the law library attracted many scholars from Harvard, Yale, and Oxford law schools who were excited to learn of some of our rare books. They have indeed been perused and studied, not gathering dust.

¶18 In my twenty-four years here, Bob always brought the right people together, working as one to move the law library and the Law Center forward. He never thought of the law library as a separate entity. He always spoke in terms of the Law Center, the university, the legal world.

¶19 Bob built exceptional collections at the law library and exceptional programs at AALL. He inspired us to serve in so many ways. A rich Law Center archives grew as a result of his love of legal history and the need to document the Law Center’s history. He held many lively discussions on legal history, and the rare and historical books needed to document it. Slowly but steadily we built a rare books collection that attracts scholars from all over the world. Bob reached out to the alumni and created the Friends of the Edward Bennett Williams Law Library program; he prodded AALL and the Law Center to sponsor a conference on the preservation of digital legal materials, creating the Legal Information Preservation Alliance (LIPA); and brought Maryland, Virginia, and D.C. law libraries together to form the Chesapeake Project, a program that preserves born-digital legal materials. He provided a permanent home at the Georgetown Law Library for the National Equal Justice Library (NEJL), an archive of public interest lawyering.

¶20 So I would like to say thanks, Bob, for your leadership and inspiration as a caring and sensitive man. You built a great library, and a fine rare books collection that continues to grow. You’ve been my only boss in my professional career as a librarian, but you’ve been by far the best. I can hear you now, urging us all on, to take all we’ve learned from you, and take the next step forward for Georgetown, for the law librarianship community, and for librarianship in general. You would want us to keep going, to the next step up, the next shared vision. And we will.

Ellen Callinan*

¶21 Bob Oakley was the consummate academic law librarian, supremely comfortable in the roles of scholar, administrator, politician, and fundraiser. These responsibilities would be all-consuming for an ordinary librarian, but Bob was no ordinary librarian. His passion for librarianship extended beyond academia, and he reached out to the broader Washington law library community in his own quiet

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ways. He initiated the Bridge the Gap program, not only to teach summer associates the practical skills they'd need to succeed, but also to create an opportunity for firm and academic librarians to work together toward this common goal. He invited firm librarians to join the Georgetown library staff for lunch several times a year, to share their insights on the world in which our students would be working. His Public Patron program opened the vast collection at Georgetown to the city's law firms and legal organizations. He created Georgetown's Resident Librarian program to encourage diversity in the profession and to create a unique learning opportunity for young librarians.

¶22 A long time ago, I was one of those young librarians to whom Bob extended opportunities to grow in the profession. As a result of his mentorship, I had the privilege of working for or with him for much of my career. Bob was an inspirational boss, a creative colleague, and an insightful mentor, and he was also a funny, interesting, and kind person who took delight in the simple pleasures of friendship and small triumphs of everyday librarianship. His funeral and memorial reflected the remarkable range of his interests and the stunning achievements of a life well lived.

¶23 We gathered for Bob's funeral on a sunny day in October at the Sugarloaf Congregation of Unitarian Universalists in Germantown, Maryland, where the fingertips of McMansion developments encircle pockets of rolling hills and farmland. Bob and Barbara lived there, a long commute to D.C. by most standards, but one Bob embraced as an opportunity to hop on the commuter train and settle in for some tranquil time with a good book and good music.

¶24 Some of that good music played as we took our places in a wooded, natural amphitheater near the church where the service was held. After several formal reflections on Bob's professional and personal achievements, friends and colleagues rose to share their own recollections. Each speaker seemed to reveal another facet of Bob's rich life—the nurturing older brother, the proud Scout dad who let his son Daniel make his own car for the Pinewood Derby, the Cornell Chimes Master who missed his own graduation ceremony to serenade his class with those familiar bells. One friend captured a feeling I think many of us had. "Gee," she said after introducing herself as a fellow folk-dancer from Bob's Unitarian community, "I had no idea Bob had such an impressive career. I just thought he was a funny guy who liked to dance!" I think most of us walked away from Bob's funeral with an even deeper sadness, having found new reason to mourn his untimely death.

¶25 Several weeks later, Georgetown held a memorial to celebrate Bob's life and legacy on what would have been his birthday, November 6. Librarians flew in from around the country to pay their respects to a dear friend and professional giant. Once again, speakers chronicled Bob's professional achievements as a copyright scholar, dedicated legislative advocate, resourceful administrator, and national leader.

¶26 Since the funeral, I have been thinking about the last lines of a poem by Roland Gittelsohn entitled *A Litany of Remembrance*, which we all read at the end of his service:

When we have decisions that are difficult to make, we remember them.
 When we have achievements that are based on theirs, we remember them.
 As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.⁴

Kenneth D. Crews*

¶27 Bob Oakley was a librarian and champion of many causes, but he was also a charming colleague and an influential teacher. I never sat in a classroom with Bob, but he taught me much. Bob Oakley was present in the early years of the struggle between librarianship and the often mystifying Copyright Act of 1976. I was barely initiating myself into the ways of copyright law, concluding graduate studies at UCLA, when I found the work of Robert L. Oakley, the passionate advocate for preservation of library collections. What I actually found was a model of temperate scholarship, with a strong practical bent. Bob was then the author of a new and highly important report, *Copyright and Preservation: A Serious Problem in Need of a Thoughtful Solution*,⁵ published in 1990 by the Commission on Preservation and Access.

¶28 Bob's report was informative and inspiring. There I was, trying to decide the shape of my new academic career, and finding relatively few academics aware of any copyright issues. Bob's report rang all the right bells. The topic—preservation—was one of my own pet interests. His work was thorough and scholarly. His perspective was helpful and pragmatic. His values reflected the virtues of library service. Bob was my kind of colleague.

¶29 We met in the early 1990s, and I was immediately taken by the warmth of his character and the sincere attention he gave to all opinions. Indeed, I have to admit that one of our first conversations included my launching a critique or two of his legal conclusions. Maybe I was not as diplomatic as possible, but Bob became an instant model of openness. Without hesitation, he invited me to offer any comments, and he genuinely integrated them into his thinking. He did not resist criticism; he learned from it. That conversation, and Bob's welcoming demeanor, have been my standard ever since. I only hope that I can embody "Bob's

4. Adapted from Roland B. Gittelsohn, *A Litany of Remembrance*, in *GATES OF PRAYER* 552, 552 (1975).

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5. ROBERT L. OAKLEY, *COPYRIGHT AND PRESERVATION* (1990).

spirit” when critics scrutinize my work. In our last meeting, in early 2007, Bob and I shared a firm handshake, a supportive pat on the back, and a conversation that continued the collegiality.

¶30 Bob’s passing is tragic for his family and for numerous colleagues throughout the world who benefited from his insights, wisdom, and principled perseverance. For those of us immersed in copyright law, Bob was a titan. He reframed our thinking about fair use and Section 108 of the Copyright Act, just as the first computers and other technologies were testing the law and opening new opportunities for libraries. He brought clear thinking to the challenges, and he set the debates on a constructive course. Bob had the extraordinary ability to see the right issues and to bring sound reasoning to the task. Bob’s early studies of the preservation problem eventually led Congress to reexamine the language of Section 108. His delightful charm allowed him to effectively mediate discussion of thorny issues amidst sharp conflict. Most of all, he stood by his principles, and he always had a welcoming smile for anyone entering the debate. Bob was a powerful and important force. He made an important difference. Our hearts are with his family; in our heads we realize that no one will take Bob’s place.

Laura N. Gasaway*

¶31 Bob was a dear friend and a wonderful colleague whom I had the pleasure of knowing for many years. I loved working with him and did so on a wide variety of issues, but especially on copyright. When I was AALL President, Bob came to me and talked about how AALL really needed to do something to become a major player among library associations on issues of national concern such as copyright, information policy, and the like. Other associations had legislative counsel and often were called upon to testify before Congress and help draft legislation. Despite the higher qualifications of law librarians to do this, AALL was just not so represented at the time.

¶32 The Washington Representative was Bob Oakley’s dream, and he made it a reality. The leadership he and Mary Alice Baish provided strengthened our association and offered all librarians a voice of reason, knowledge, and legal sophistication in Washington.

¶33 Bob was a scholar, a teacher, and also a leader in law librarianship. I admired him tremendously. He will be missed for years to come.

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James S. Heller*

¶34 Most people who were born in the last thirty years never heard of Philip Hart, a Democrat from Michigan who served in the U.S. Senate until his death in 1976 at the age of 64. If they have heard of Phil Hart at all, it is because the Hart Senate Office Building is named after him, or because they heard the words “The Conscience of the Senate,” which is what senators on both sides of the aisle called their colleague.

¶35 A description of a biography of Hart—*Philip Hart: The Conscience of the Senate*⁶—says much about the Senator. Here are some excerpts: “Author and sponsor of critical legislation, particularly in the areas of civil rights, antitrust enforcement, and consumer and environmental protection He was intelligent and committed, idealistic and courageous, honest and humble A role model for many, an inspiration for others, the extent of his influence was demonstrated in the fall of 1976 as he was retiring from the Senate and dying of cancer.”⁷ Columnist Mary McGrory wrote that “naming (the new Senate building) for Phil Hart was a nice gesture, and if they could build his qualities . . . into the walls, we would have a Senate that would astound the world with its civility and enlightenment.”⁸

¶36 If we substituted a few facts, the description of Senator Hart would fit Bob Oakley. Phil Hart served in the Senate for just under eighteen years. Bob Oakley served as AALL’s Washington Representative for almost exactly the same amount of time. The Hart Building was named to honor a great Senator. The Reading Room at Georgetown has been renamed the “Robert L. Oakley Reading Room” to honor a superb law librarian and a wonderful colleague. More important, the Hart Building and the Oakley Reading Room honor men who were “intelligent, committed, idealistic, courageous, honest, and humble”—kind and decent men who died too young but left legacies that will last forever.

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6. MICHAEL O’BRIEN, *PHILIP HART: THE CONSCIENCE OF THE SENATE* (1995).

7. BiblioVault, Book Information: Philip Hart: The Conscience of the Senate, <http://www.bibliovault.org/BV.book.epl?BookId=5616> (last visited Jan. 28, 2008).

8. *Id.*

Roger F. Jacobs*

¶37 The news of the death of Bob Oakley came like a staggering blow to the head and heart. He was a colleague, a friend of long standing, and a great law librarian.

¶38 I first met Bob when, as an associate law librarian at Cornell in 1977, he was part of the team that interviewed me for a position there. His maturity, his awareness of the potential of law librarianship as a profession, and his justifiable ambition were obvious.

¶39 After directing the Boston University law library for several years, he moved to Washington in 1982 to assume the leadership of the law library at Georgetown. This prominent Jesuit university in the nation's capital envisioned itself as a law school that would stand with the most prestigious in the nation. They chose Bob to forge the development of a library to support the school's immense vision. As Librarian of the Supreme Court, I had a front row seat on Bob's beginning efforts down the "Hill." He recruited and developed outstanding librarians and staff, many of whom have followed his lead in providing superior law library services throughout the land. He expanded the collection with such vigor that twice during his tenure library facilities had to be expanded to respond to the growth of Georgetown legal scholarship. And what facilities they are. There are few examples of law library architecture or design that match the quality and functionality that Bob inspired in the Edward Bennett Williams Law Library Building and the John Wolff International and Comparative Law Library within the Hotung Law Center Building.

¶40 As president of AALL the same year Bob took up the leadership of the Georgetown Library, I valued his insightful advice on professional matters related to the Association Constitution and the Bylaws Committee, which he chaired. Even then, he exhibited the breadth of vision that would prompt his election in successive decades, first to the AALL Executive Board and then to its presidency. Unlike many past presidents, Bob's service to the legal profession through law librarianship did not fade in subsequent years. His dedicated leadership as AALL's Washington Affairs Representative highlighted the role and interest of librarians in a wide range of issues impacting the delivery of legal information and its impact on scholarship. The quality of his involvement made him a recognized leader among numerous national library groups, and he was frequently called upon to be the lead advocate for the positions of these library organizations.

¶41 When Georgetown was considering Bob's application for tenure, I had the honor, as an outside referee, to review his work and offer some evaluation of his

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stature as a law librarian. I do not have the text of my report to the Georgetown Tenure Committee before me, but I do recall indicating that, in Bob Oakley, Georgetown was blessed with one of the nation's most talented, thoughtful, and well respected law librarians. Several decades on, my view has not changed.

¶42 Bob was a giant among us. While his all too early death is a stinging blow, he left a legacy that can inspire all those who follow in his footsteps.

Kumar Percy Jayasuriya*

¶43 "A man's life," Justice Learned Hand said during the Supreme Court Bar memorial for Justice Brandeis, "like a piece of tapestry, is made up of many strands which interwoven make a pattern; to separate a single one and look at it alone, not only destroys the whole, but gives the strand itself a false value."⁹

¶44 The same is true of Bob Oakley. There is too much to say about Bob, but at the risk of minimizing his other achievements, I will focus on what I knew the most about—Bob as a leader and mentor. While I had heard of him years before I met him, I personally knew Bob for too short a time, and still he made a lasting impact on my life. Our relationship had much to do with mentorship. He was a mentor to me as I learned to be a leader in his law library, and he asked me to help mentor other law librarians. He often asked me about how my family liked living in D.C. and asked after my two-year-old son. When we talked about daycare he told me about the daycare he used for his daughter. On her first birthday the daycare provider had a birthday party for her. Bob still beamed when he remembered that "she didn't know what the cake and the party was about but she knew that everyone was paying attention to her and that they all cared for her." As I think about Bob's management style, I think of that story. When I went into his office, I knew that he cared about my future and he cared about the library and the services we provided. I saw him take interest in everyone he worked with. During staff events he basked in the joy of others.

¶45 As a manager he gave us the freedom to develop our own ideas about librarianship and patron service. At the same time, he took the time to discuss our ideas and helped us refine them. Bob was always able to bring out the best in us.

¶46 During Bob's funeral service, Dean Aleinikoff noted that in a city of monuments and memorials, Bob created a library that was itself a monument to legal information. Yet Bob was always striving to make the library a leader in innovative collections and services.

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9. PROCEEDINGS OF THE BAR OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES AND MEETING OF THE COURT IN MEMORY OF ASSOCIATE JUSTICE LOUIS D. BRANDEIS 19 (1942), reprinted in 1 MEMORIALS OF THE JUSTICES OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES 177 (Roger F. Jacobs comp., 1981).

¶47 One of the greatest things about Bob is that he was serious when he investigated the future of law libraries. The dean asked him to build today the library of the future. Bob took this as a real intellectual challenge. He challenged everyone in his library to study trends in librarianship and to discuss ways that Georgetown could help design the library of the future. My favorite events in the library were the ones where he would lead a discussion among the staff, discussing Library 2.0 services, the future of cataloging, or some other debate regarding the future of librarianship. He led every discussion with the zeal of an inspired teacher and with a practical eye.

Justice Earl Johnson*

¶48 Bob Oakley was a visionary—a visionary with a heart. Almost twenty years ago I came to him with an idea for a National Equal Justice Library (NEJL). The purpose was to preserve the archival and published history of civil legal aid and indigent criminal defense services and make that history available to policymakers, researchers, students, and to posterity. The idea was backed by the American Bar Association, the National Legal Aid and Defender Association, and the American Association of Law Libraries. We discussed the possibility of housing that new national library in what was then the nearly brand-new law library building at Georgetown. Bob saw this as a part of his vision for the Georgetown Law Library—viewing it as a perfect fit for what he felt Georgetown Law was all about. Unfortunately, in the end he was unable to find the dedicated space the NEJL board felt essential. Nonetheless, Bob generously offered to store any papers that we might collect while we were locating a proper home for the NEJL—an offer we gladly accepted.

¶49 Along the way, we did find a first home for the NEJL at American University. But in 2002, when we were looking to move it to a new location, I recalled that 1989 conversation with Bob. Perhaps we could end up with our first choice, after all. So I called and then traveled to Washington to meet with Bob. Again he wanted the National Equal Justice Library at his institution. By this time, it was far more than an idea. There were over 1500 books, several hundred boxes of unpublished papers, more than seventy oral history videotapes, and even a substantial collection of publications about legal aid in other countries.

¶50 At first, Bob wasn't sure he could find the space for this set of collections. But he refused to give up. We kept meeting and negotiating and looking at different

* Justice, California Courts of Appeal (retired), Los Angeles, California; Founding President, Chair, Site Relocation Committee, and Executive Committee member, Consortium for the National Equal Justice Library, Inc. This memorial message is written on behalf of the National Equal Justice Library Board of Directors.

options for nearly two years. Then, when I arrived for what I feared might be our last meeting, Bob opened the conversation with barely disguised glee, “I think we’ve finally found the space.” A few months later, the Memorandum of Understanding was signed, and we were on our way. Last year Bob found the NEJL a terrific archivist to organize the archival papers and otherwise make that library run—Anne Mar.

¶51 The board and those otherwise involved with the National Equal Justice Library—and, in reality, all the civil legal services lawyers and public defenders in the nation—owe Bob Oakley a profound debt of gratitude. Because of him, their history has found a permanent home and thus has been saved for the current generation and generations beyond. He knew this in his heart, which is why he labored so hard to find that home at his library. It is a shame he couldn’t be around to enjoy the full fruits of his labors.

¶52 As one who spent years meeting with him about something that meant so much to him—and in the process to see and know him up close—I developed great affection as well as respect for Bob Oakley. I will miss him personally for what he was as a person, just as the National Equal Justice Library will miss him for his dedication to the goals and values that institution exemplifies. We have all lost a wonderful man.

Janis L. Johnston*

¶53 I had the good fortune of working with Bob on AALL activities for nearly seven years. Bob was AALL president while I was treasurer, and then when I was president, he was still actively engaged through his role as Washington Affairs Representative. Through countless board meetings, committee assignments, conference calls, and board dinners, I developed a deep admiration and profound respect for my friend, Bob Oakley. His service to AALL and the profession was unique, innovative, and deeply passionate. More than any law librarian I have ever known, Bob was committed to ensuring that law libraries continue to play a critical role in furthering democratic society.

¶54 One of his unique talents was the extraordinary ability to see trends emerging from their earliest glimmerings, formulate strategic responses, and take action before most of us had a clue that something new was on the horizon. Long before most of us realized the importance of advocacy on information policy, Bob recognized the necessity of speaking out on behalf of law libraries, and he had the vision to persuade AALL to establish a Washington presence. Before many of us had

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fully grasped the imperative of preserving born-digital legal information, Bob organized a conference on the topic at Georgetown and spearheaded the creation of the Legal Information Preservation Alliance (LIPA).

¶55 There are a host of issues identified by Bob that others in law librarianship would have eventually recognized, but Bob saw them sooner and then did more than just talk about them. Bob always did something about them. AALL and the profession will sorely miss his insightful, analytical mind coupled with a will to action. I believe that is the essence of true leadership, and Bob had it in spades.

Patrick E. Kehoe*

¶56 Robert L. Oakley was my friend. He was my cross-town colleague. And he was much more than that: Bob Oakley was everything that one can hope to find in a leader.

¶57 A great many very fine things have been written about Bob following his death. I will not attempt to repeat them. Rather, I will focus on Bob's role in the matter of the acquisition of West Publishing by Thomson, and his broader role in AALL.

¶58 I was AALL's president at the time. We, the elected leaders, learned of the possibility that this acquisition was under consideration when the president of Thomson, Brian Hall, telephoned me about it. Following this, AALL's Executive Board met in special session to learn more about the then-proposed acquisition and discuss what position, if any, AALL ought to take regarding it. In his role as the association's Washington Affairs Representative, Bob was an active participant in these discussions. Our decision was that AALL should remain neutral about the acquisition.

¶59 In reaching this decision, we all realized that AALL had an obligation to do something more. We had to offer our profession's expertise about the legal publishing industry to the Department of Justice when it conducted its antitrust inquiry into the matter. It was in fulfilling this obligation that Bob served law librarians and the broader legal profession admirably.

¶60 Bob met behind the scenes with the Department of Justice officials who would be formulating the issues to be looked into and the questions to be asked of both West and Thomson. Bob's expertise about the legal publishing industry, legal literature, copyright law, and antitrust law all were called on to resolve the matter

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and complete the inquiry. The extent of his role, which the Executive Board fully approved, may never become fully public. Suffice it to say, Robert L. Oakley provided a great deal of the background and other information that D.O.J. relied on when conducting its inquiry.

¶61 Characteristically, Bob never sought out special recognition for any of this. He seemed to view it as just another part of his obligation to all of us who entrusted him with the role of AALL's Washington Affairs Representative.

¶62 Robert Oakley was a first-class colleague in all respects and served as an inspiration and role model to all of us who were his colleagues in law librarianship. Bob excelled in the management of his library. He also excelled in his work for the broader profession, especially in his selfless service as AALL president, as Executive Board member, and as AALL's long-term Washington Affairs Representative. All this and more clearly qualify Bob Oakley as being among a small group of truly significant leaders of his generation.

¶63 He was a really remarkable human being who placed the fulfillment of his responsibilities above his personal ambition. I recall, after his having been approached by the Nominations Committee to stand as a candidate for AALL's presidency, Bob asking me if I thought he could be elected. He was concerned that he might be too tainted by the stands he had to take as Washington Affairs Representative in connection with some very divisive controversies that had arisen in our profession. Fortunately, Bob heeded my advice and went on to give AALL his all as its president. He will be missed!

Dennis C. Kim-Prieto*

¶64 As a student, I had come to know Bob Oakley by his reputation as a principled library advocate of copyright reform. I first met him in San Antonio, at the 2005 Annual Meeting; near the end of a program devoted to copyright law on the web, I stumbled (like the newbie I was) into asking the panel to respond to a well-settled question of law. And I found myself dumbstruck when Bob came up to me afterwards to say that I'd asked a very good question. Here I was, barely out of library school, pitching a real softball to a panel of serious scholars, and here was a veritable living legend in copyright advocacy coming up to me with encouraging words about a question I'd asked! Of course, in hindsight, I see that he was really encouraging me much more than he was encouraging my question about the "fixity" of text published on an Internet web site. But then, Bob always took the long view, whether he was acting as a mentor, an advocate, or an administrator.

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¶65 Librarians trained as lawyers know that advocates traditionally find their successes by focusing, laser-tight, upon the elements of the issues at stake. But Bob was an extraordinary advocate, because he combined this focus with appreciating, and responding to, the people behind these issues. By the time I met him again, at the 2006 Annual Meeting in St. Louis, I was not surprised to notice that he'd (quite unobtrusively) slipped into the inaugural meeting of the Gen X/Gen Y Caucus. When conversation at that meeting turned to wonder if the leadership of AALL even cared about their concerns, I couldn't help but "out him" as being in attendance, right then and there, as evidence that this question might be answered in the affirmative. He was so earnest about encouraging newer law librarians that if my indiscretion embarrassed him, he never let on. Instead, he replied to that caucus's questions with the wisdom that comes from the experience of listening patiently before acting decisively.

¶66 Bob's accomplishments leave a rich intellectual legacy, but his personality, his very spirit, enriched everyone who ever got to know him. To call Bob Oakley a gentleman and a scholar is no mere cliché: it is a true and accurate statement of his essence. We are all better off for his work, and we will miss him terribly.

Harry S. Martin III*

¶67 The five years I spent at Georgetown were formative for me. I had the support of a great dean and felt I was able to set the library on a positive path. When I left for Harvard in 1981, however, I knew much remained to be done. So I was naturally interested in the person who succeeded me. I did not know Bob well at that time, but soon came to know I had left Georgetown in very capable hands.

¶68 The building he planned (the Edward Bennett Williams Library) fit its environment well, returned much needed office and classroom space to the rest of the school, and has a wonderful "feel" about it. The first time I walked in, I felt the urge to sit down, put up my feet, and read a book. Bob saw that the collection grew, new services were added, technology was absorbed purposefully. Then he planned a second library, which I had to concede was better than Harvard's second because it had a gym!

¶69 Bob's contributions to the library profession were significant. He was a strong voice for us in Washington, encouraging government to improve its distribution of information. His vision and energy got the Legal Information Preservation Alliance off the ground. Twice a year I had the opportunity to have dinner with him. Those dinners became my post-graduate education, and Bob's views were

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always influential. He always dealt with the big issues and always from a position of values. As Jim Feinerman reminds us, Bob combined reason and commitment in the best way possible. The fact that AALL has lost its *consiglieri*, however, is not as important as the fact that many of us have lost a friend.

¶70 As Mary Oliver said in *American Primitive*:

To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.¹⁰

But it is not easy.

Anne Myers*

¶71 One of the highlights of every AALL Executive Board meeting was Bob Oakley's report from the Washington Affairs Office. Using only a small piece of paper with a few scribbled words or phrases, Bob would talk for thirty to forty minutes, educating us on two or three areas of breaking interest. Sometimes he would address cutting-edge technology issues being discussed at WIPO, where he was an active participant on our behalf. Other topics included cases before the courts at different levels, such as *Grokster*,¹¹ and congressional activity with policy implications for us as librarians and for the association as a whole.

¶72 Bob's gift was to distill out the important points and show us why they mattered, why we had to pay attention, and what the possible consequences were for various outcomes. No question was too basic, and each report became a teachable moment. These short conversational reports from Bob were gems focused on where we were headed, not just the things that had already been accomplished, leaving all of us better informed and aware of how interrelated these issues actually are.

10. MARY OLIVER, *In Blackwater Woods*, in *AMERICAN PRIMITIVE* 82, 83 (1983).

* Librarian for Serials Services, Yale Law School, New Haven, Connecticut; AALL Executive Board Member, 2004–2007

11. *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc. v. Grokster*, 545 U.S. 913 (2005).

¶73 Whenever he spoke, I was aware of just how little I knew, but my boundaries were stretched and I learned from every report, every e-mail. We joked with Bob that he should start a series of “Bob-casts” to be available on the Washington Affairs Office web site, giving other AALL members a chance to learn as well. He didn’t think it was a very workable idea and thought we were crazy to suggest it, but repeated urging finally wore him down and he agreed at the New Orleans Annual Meeting to start recording them. I regret for all of us that he never got the chance to actually see that through.

Carol Avery Nicholson* and Ruth Hill**

¶74 We have lost a national treasure and a treasured friend. Bob Oakley’s contributions as AALL president and Washington Affairs Representative are, of course, well known. In addition to Bob’s tireless efforts on behalf of AALL in these capacities, and his extraordinary intelligence, warmth, and humor, Bob’s impact on legal information will live on through his inspired leadership in the founding of the Legal Information Preservation Alliance (LIPA). Bob organized, and AALL cosponsored a conference held at Georgetown University Law Center to develop a preservation agenda. The conference, titled “Preserving Legal Information for the 21st Century: Toward a National Agenda,”¹² led to the creation of LIPA.

¶75 Bob’s support for diversity in AALL and the George A. Strait Minority Scholarship Endowment fund particularly are special to us as AALL’s first minority president and first African-American secretary, respectively. We are most grateful for the time he took to write the foreword for our book (co-authored with Vicente E. Garces), *Celebrating Diversity*.¹³ In Bob’s words: “Diversity in all its forms is an essential component of our American society The diversity of AALL’s members is a microcosm of society. As such, it is vitally important that we take the necessary steps to recruit members from a variety of backgrounds. . . .”¹⁴

¶76 Bob Oakley’s support for diversity within the profession is also reflected in the residency program that he established in 1999 at the Georgetown Law Center to attract candidates from under-represented backgrounds. For these reasons and countless more, Bob always will be remembered as a compassionate person with a

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** AALL Secretary-Elect, 2008–2011; Director of Library Services & Associate Professor of Law, Southern University Law Library, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

12. LEGAL INFORMATION PRESERVATION ALLIANCE, PRESERVING LEGAL INFORMATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: CONFERENCE REPORT (2003), http://www.aallnet.org/committee/lipa/LIPA_Conference_Report.pdf.

13. CAROL AVERY NICHOLSON ET AL., *CELEBRATING DIVERSITY: A LEGACY OF MINORITY LEADERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES* (2006).

14. *Id.* at xi.

kind word, a twinkle in his eye, and a smile. Most significantly, Bob's continual willingness to be an extraordinary advocate for our profession is a legacy to be celebrated. He will be greatly missed.

M. Kathleen Price*

¶77 Bob Oakley and I have had parallel professional careers: While I was at Duke, he was at Cornell; he moved to Boston University as I headed to Minnesota and to Georgetown through my tenures at Library of Congress and NYU. While we served as directors of large libraries with similar financial, personnel, and policy issues, we made common cause through efforts to find a unique role for law libraries in preservation. It was Bob who provided the leadership to keep it on the front burner for two decades.

¶78 Bob and I served together on the Electronic Resources Committee of the ABA's Administrative Law Section. There he worked with industry and the Electronic Frontier Foundation to deal with fair use and other technology issues relating to the early Internet philosophy that "information wants to be free." I had always thought that being well prepared and articulate were the keys to success. Bob knew it was more than that: he was always better versed on the issues than anyone, but it was his easy-going personality coupled with respect for others and their divergent viewpoints that earned him respect among friends and foes. When he spoke for the library community, everyone knew that his word could be trusted. He didn't involve himself in peripheral issues, but picked those where he could be effective for our community. As a result, he became the spokesman for the leading library associations. When Bob was involved, he could build successful coalitions; I never saw him become involved in personality disputes or appear to be controlled by a particular faction.

¶79 It was as creator of LIPA with its mission to preserve "born digital" information, the modern incarnation of earlier preservation efforts, that Bob will be best remembered. Bob chose the initial participants and devoted staff to the project. That LIPA now has a paid executive director is a tribute to Bob's patience and creativity. Would that we still had the benefit of his gift of identifying issues ahead of the curve and working to put together the best people to solve them!

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Marylin J. Raisch*

¶80 Back in the 1980s, many law libraries began to build extensive research collections as we saw the beginnings of interdisciplinary legal research and the more frequent use of international, comparative, and foreign legal sources. However, it would have taken foresight and planning for many law libraries to understand what building an international legal collection comparable to those at older institutions might entail. Unlike legal research in American law, which may only infrequently require research in materials from the nineteenth or early twentieth century, legal research in international law continuously draws upon historic and classic materials based upon established works from what Article 38 of the *Statute of the International Court of Justice* calls “the teachings of the most highly qualified publicists of the various nations, as subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law.”¹⁵

¶81 When Bob Oakley hired Ellen Schaffer to help build both a foundational, and a current, updated collection of international legal materials, he could not have known for sure that by 2007 the curriculum guide for Georgetown would boast over ten clusters of courses specifically designated as international, and many more with international or transnational components integrated into the course. (A week of intensive introduction to the concepts and problems in international and comparative law would become part of the first-year experience for law students.) With judicious study and careful selection, Bob and Ellen purchased the older sets and materials necessary to provide access to authentic copies of treaties, both for the United States and involving other jurisdictions. Appropriate foreign materials were acquired and a tradition of cooperation with the Library of Congress and its fine collections began. All of this would not have happened without Bob’s leadership. I am but the latest beneficiary of the opportunity to work with the collection and to continue to shape it for the needs of legal practice in a globalized economy.

¶82 Bob was able to see the ways that the John Wolff International and Comparative Law Library would further promote and enhance the Law Center’s focus on international and comparative law. He set in motion the planning and energy that was so evident in the building of the Edward Bennett Williams Library. Washington is the richer for all that he contributed to the acquisition and preservation of legal materials.

¶83 I thank Bob for having confidence in me and allowing me to join the journey to a new library and a new set of challenges for myself as a manager and legal information specialist. I will miss his humor and sharp insight into issues. Thanks for making the profession so professional and the job so much fun.

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15. Statute of the International Court of Justice, June 26, 1945, art. 38(1) (d), 59 Stat. 1055, 1060.

Merle J. Slyhoff*

¶84 Bob's presence within AALL was well known, and his work on behalf of the members and the Association was not only respected but revered by many. AALL members who never worked with or met Bob know his name and reputation based on the work he did for the Association. If too young to remember his stint as president, they are aware of his timeless contributions as the Washington Affairs Representative.

¶85 I had met Bob many times in my long association with AALL. Our first meeting, which certainly put me at ease in his presence, was in an elevator at a long-ago Annual Meeting, talking about international folk dancing. But we never served on a committee together, we never worked on a project together . . . until I served on the AALL Executive Board from 2003 through 2006.

¶86 As Washington Affairs Representative, Bob attended all Board meetings. Prior to being elected to the Board, I followed the activities of the Washington office as did many of my colleagues. I skimmed the reports that appeared in the *AALL Spectrum* and perused the e-mails asking for support for specific projects. While I understood and respected the work Bob conducted as Washington Affairs Representative, I never comprehended the massive amounts of time he spent behind the scenes on any given project, or the passion with which he conducted his business on our behalf. Only by listening to him passionately report on his activities did I come to truly understand his contributions. Any one project that he tackled on behalf of the membership would have proven difficult for many of our colleagues, but Bob would relate numerous activities that he had or was addressing, all on our behalf. He sang the praises of his assistants in the Washington office, but you knew that Bob's passion was a strong driving force. I would listen to his reports and think to myself, "When does he have time for himself?"

¶87 Bob's presence at the Board meetings went beyond merely giving his Washington office report. While he didn't contribute to every Board discussion, you knew he was observing and digesting all that was said. You could tell Bob felt it was important for the standing Board members to participate in the current activities of the Association. There were occasions, however, when the Board would turn to Bob for his sage advice. Whether it was to clarify some issue discussed at a prior year's Board meeting, or to seek his opinion on a current issue, Bob's response was always insightful.

¶88 Board discussions often include presentation of the "unpopular" side, the devil's advocate position that needed to be raised if for no other reason than to make sure all sides were addressed. On more than one occasion Bob came up to

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me during a break or at the end of the day to thank me for raising the “unpopular” side. I’m certain he did the same with other colleagues at the meetings, but for me it validated what I saw as my role as a Board member. He championed those who raised the less popular “but we also need to consider” points of view, the devil’s advocate comments that he recognized as crucial to the discussion.

¶89 Bob represented AALL, and all that we stand for, to his law library colleagues, and to the national and international legal communities with a dignity, demeanor, and understanding that will be greatly missed.

Cornell H. Winston*

¶90 I recall seeing Bob Oakley at several Annual Meetings early in my career. He was an imposing, stately figure, who always seemed to have on a suit and tie. As a new law librarian, I knew Bob was someone important, but someone whom I never expected to meet, and if I did, would never be able to have a substantive conversation with. How wrong I was!

¶91 Before I was elected to the Board in 2006, I would run into Bob, but I never had a lengthy conversation or encounter with him until the 100th Annual Meeting in St. Louis. Observing Bob at the St. Louis meeting heightened my respect and admiration for his demeanor, his wisdom, and his effect on fellow law librarians. His calming, steady voice was always a source of wisdom and guidance. His institutional memory brought issues into perspective. He never raised his voice or showed frustration. Bob would not say much, but when he spoke it reminded me of the moniker from E.F. Hutton from years past: “When Bob Oakley talks, people listen.”

¶92 I will always treasure his wisdom and steady focus, and he will always be a compass. When dealing with difficult matters, I often ask myself, “How would Bob handle this issue?” Bob has enhanced my appreciation for quality leadership, for the law, and for our profession. Our Association is better because of Bob’s many contributions, but his passing leaves a great void, and we feel the loss.

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