



St. Mary's Law Journal

Volume 50 | Number 4


Article 3

11-2019

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Recommended Citation

Leo Womack, *My Friend—Lee H. Lytton*, 50 ST. MARY'S L.J. xix (2019).
Available at: <https://commons.stmarytx.edu/thestmaryslawjournal/vol50/iss4/3>

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TRIBUTE

MY FRIEND—LEE H. LYTTON

LEO WOMACK*

The first time I met Lee was in the summer of 1946 when we were both about to begin first grade. Lee's mother and my mother were great friends, and since we were going to be going to the same school, she had Lee's dad drive him to Riviera to meet me in front of my dad's grocery store. Lee's father was the County Judge of Kennedy County and they lived in Sarita, a town of some 500 inhabitants, while I lived eight miles away in Riviera, Texas, a town of 1,200 or so. They drove up in front of my dad's store in an old WWII jeep, and that began our friendship.

We both attended a two-room schoolhouse in nearby Vattmann, Texas, where 1st through 4th grades were in one room and 5th through 8th in the other. There were eight students in our grade but the education from the nuns of the Sacred Heart of Incarnate Word was more than adequate. Through high school, we maintained a very close relationship, although Lee was in Austin and I remained in Riviera.

One memorable summer during our grade school days, I was invited to spend a month with his family at their ranch near Vicksburg, Mississippi. Of special note was the evening we decided to "camp out"—traveling miles "we thought" from the ranch house to pitch a camp with hammocks to sleep in. At about 10pm that evening, Lee's Dad found us miserably fighting off mosquitos and chiggers calling out for us to come on in (we were actually in the backyard having walked in a circle for several miles and didn't know

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it) and take a bath in calamine lotion to stop the itching, which we gladly did.

After University I moved to Houston to work for Arthur Anderson as a CPA, and Lee wound up in Houston working for Baker Botts and then began his “wandering days” by transferring to the DA’s office for a short stint before announcing that he was joining the FBI. During this period, we both began our families and did not get together much until he left the FBI in the 70s and he had returned to Corpus Christi to start an independent Oil and Gas Exploration company with two other friends. During this period, he was frequently in Houston raising drilling funds, and I had started an independent Investment Banking firm with a partner, so we began collaborating on a business basis as well as our ongoing friendship.

All was well during this period and many good times were had until the terrible 80s when Texas went into a major recession as oil collapsed and the Texas banking system along with it. Lee re-invented himself again, deciding to begin a career at St Mary’s while I stayed in Houston. Five years ago, I had the opportunity to take over a small Oil and Gas micro-cap E&P company and needed a qualified Board member which Lee was delighted to fill. During the last few years we spent a lot of time together and had great successes building a fairly significant company. I can tell you for sure, teaching and his tenure at St Mary’s was the highlight of his life. He loved his students and was looking at retirement with mixed feelings of accomplishment and regret that this part of his life was over. Little did we know that a week before his stroke that it was indeed coming to an end. He had invited me to meet him at Byrne to see his new retirement home that was nearing completion. A few days before visiting, I called him to say I would come that weekend. Susan answered his phone with the devastating news.

Lee was very proud of his family and relished his time with them, especially with the little “ankle biters” as he lovingly called his grandchildren.