

RENNARD STRICKLAND – A REMEMBRANCE

*Lawrence K. Hellman**

I was always struck by the way Rennard Strickland, for a man with so many significant responsibilities, always had an almost-gleeful glimmer in his eye and a face that seemed to be straining to suppress a smile that was struggling to reveal itself. His affect was of a man who was at peace with himself, delighting in whatever task lay before him.

This may have been one of the qualities that drew so many institutions to turn to him for leadership—especially in challenging times. For there was an almost-magical spirit about him that went a long way toward instilling calm and clarity among those he led. And it certainly didn't hurt that he was often ready with a story or an anecdote (sometimes, perhaps, apocryphal) that clarified what was at stake in the matter at hand.

Rennard included one such story in his inaugural address upon assuming the deanship at Oklahoma City University School of Law in 1995. There, he explored an axiom his mother had shared with him when he was a child: “Rennard, you can be *anything* you want to be; but you can't be *everything* you want to be.” Rennard viewed this as important advice not only for youngsters finding their way in the world, but also for institutions seeking to make a positive impact on society. The lesson was that, while it is good to consider many possible paths forward, one's ultimate goals should be chosen with humility and sharp focus.

Readers acquainted with Rennard's broad-ranging and multi-faceted career may think he failed to heed his mother's advice. But just as a single diamond contains multiple facets, the totality of Rennard's career might be viewed as constituting a single gem whose glow motivated the people and institutions he touched to be the best that they could be. May that glow long continue.

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