

Nova Law Review

Volume 14, Issue 1

1989

Article 2

Dedication to Karl Krastin

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Abstract

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Karl Krastin: Friend and Colleague

This is the second issue of a Law Review dedicated to Karl Krastin. The first was a volume of the University of Toledo Law Review, published in the fall of 1976. That occasion was Karl's June 30, 1976, retirement as Dean of the University of Toledo College of Law, a position he held for thirteen years. Given the historically short tenure of law school deans, Karl's feat made him a law school Lou Gehrig. Had the Ohio University system not required retirement at age sixty-five, Karl might have continued on. But Ohio's rules were Nova's good fortune.

Karl called me in the spring of 1976 and wondered, in his raspy voice, whether we might have need of him. Our Law Center was in its infancy. We had opened our doors in the fall of 1974, secured provisional accreditation shortly thereafter, and were marching ahead with a young, vigorous faculty. Here was an *eminence grise*, a disciple of Myres McDougal and Harold Lasswell at Yale, a Yale S.J.D., a former Army Major, a University of Florida Law Professor from 1948 to 1963, a law school dean who, according to a colleague, took Toledo "from a small night school located in the attic of the University library to a school of 600 students located in a well-designed new law center." Did we need him? Yes.

I knew that Karl would bring to our endeavor more than just his law school experiences. He would bring wisdom, kindness, good judgment, decency. I am struck now, upon reading the Toledo Law Review dedications, how often Karl was described in terms that attest to his humanism. The adjectives are telling: honest, warm, open, fair, gracious, democratic, compassionate, approachable, kind, decent, friendly. All who have known Karl (at least those who have written about him) praise him for being a good person. In any life that would be enough, but there is more.

Karl was a mentor to many. Lester Brickman, whose comments follow these, is one of many beneficiaries of Karl's forty law school years in New Haven, Gainesville, Toledo, and Fort Lauderdale. As I travel, I am always asked by judges, lawyers, and professors whom he taught, and touched, "How's Karl?"

I answer them this way: Karl is great. He received an honorary degree from Nova University in 1987 when, after eleven years teaching constitutional law, constitutional decision-making, and patent and copyrights, he retired. He lives in Boca Raton with his wife Barbara, travels some, and reads a lot. He is still committed to understanding the world through the eyes of a social scientist. He worries about oppression, in all of its forms, and grapples with the reasons for our social dilemmas. He is interested in the Critical Legal Studies movement, and empathizes with its iconoclasm and anti-establishment approach. Karl continues to be engaged and engaging; a source of wit and wisdom polished by time and reflection.

I have known Karl for almost 30 years. Like so many, I was his student in constitutional law at the University of Florida. I struggled to hear his voice, scratched by smoking, telling me the manner in which the Founding Fathers sought to restrain governmental power and guarantee freedom of religion, expression, and thought. Although I can recall no specific principle of law Karl taught me (probably because the McDougal-Lasswell school of thought was short on single right answers), he made me a believer. Later, each time I prepared to argue in the Supreme Court, I thought of Karl's grace and intelligence, and hoped that my teacher's lessons had been well learned.

Writing this makes me remember how much I care about Karl, and it reminds me that I owe my friend and colleague a telephone call. How nice to have Karl so close, and never far away.

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