

Oklahoma City University School of Law

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Memorial to Bob Lyman

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MEMORIAL TO BOB LYMAN

DEAN LAWRENCE K. HELLMAN*

In the end, Bob Lyman's heart let him down. But during his life, that heart never, ever let anyone else down. Bob's heart was warm, generous, and comforting. It was a heart that produced one of the biggest smiles I have ever seen. Constantly. It was there every time he greeted anyone – whether it was a long-time acquaintance or stranger. Bob's smile was genuine, and it was infectious. It reflected a spirit of optimism, genuineness, and sincerity – qualities that, with the help of his influence, are now permanently woven into the institutional culture of Oklahoma City University School of Law, the school he long served and once led.

Just a week before he passed away, I heard a story about Bob that sums up who he was and what he meant to our law school. I was at a luncheon for alumni in St. Louis during the annual meeting of the Missouri Bar Association. There were about 15 alumni there, some of whom had graduated thirty years ago and others who had just graduated. As I like to do on such occasions, I went around the room and asked each alum to introduce himself or herself to the group and tell how he or she happened to attend OCU Law and something that stands out in his or her memory about the experience here. One of the alums who was there that day and had attended our school in the 1970s told about how Bob Lyman had personally touched him. This man had been out of college for several years and had fulfilled his military obligation. He had been admitted to OCU and several other law schools and was ready to commence his legal education when a family medical emergency required him to seek to defer his matriculation for a year. The other law schools he contacted told him that he would have to reapply. When he visited OCU and presented his predicament to Bob Lyman, who was Acting Dean at the time, Bob didn't hesitate a second before he said, "You take care of your fam-

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ily situation and don't worry about a thing. Your place will be here next year." After that, this prospective student didn't even bother to reapply to the other schools. He knew he had found the school where he belonged – because of Bob Lyman. And that was the OCU experience he remembers to this day.

I know that there are countless stories like that one, where Bob treated a student with the kind of respect and consideration that we would hope all of our graduates would accord those with whom they interact. Through such acts of kindness, Bob taught us all. And he wasn't just teaching us how to be good lawyers. He was teaching us how to be good human beings.

I believe that the last time I saw Bob was in January 2003, when he came to a grand reception at the home of Bill and Pam Shdeed as we celebrated our law school's admission to membership in the Association of American Law Schools – the AALS. There was Bob with that great big smile. I don't think there was a prouder person there, for Bob knew how long and hard we had worked to reach that milestone. And he also knew, I'm sure, that his career here had played an important role in helping us get there.

This coming January, at the meeting of the AALS House of Delegates, as the delegates from 165 law schools throughout America stand to show their respect, the names will be read of those law professors who passed away during the previous year. Because we *did* achieve AALS membership during his lifetime, and because of the role he played in getting us there, it is altogether fitting that Syllas "Bob" Lyman's name will be among those that are read. When I hear his name, I will try my hardest to smile like Bob taught us all how to smile, and to be proud of the fact that he and I were colleagues in an enterprise that will always reflect his good and humane influence.