University of South Dakota School of Law

From the SelectedWorks of Christine Hutton

2007

Issue Dedication - Frank Slagle

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DEDICATION

The Board of Editors for Volume 52 of the *South Dakota Law Review* is pleased to dedicate this volume to the memory of Frank J. Slagle, Professor of Law at the University of South Dakota School of Law. After a two-year battle with cancer – a battle fought with grace and strength – Professor Slagle passed away on September 24, 2006, two days before his 59th birthday. Professor Slagle's contributions to the law school, his commitment to the legal community of South Dakota, and his impact on the field of tax law will never be forgotten, and the *Law Review* is privileged to join Professor Slagle's colleagues and students in honoring these accomplishments. Below are tributes from some who were closest to Professor Slagle, reflecting the deep feelings of appreciation and sorrow that many have been felt upon the loss of a truly remarkable man.

Professor Slagle was known by many as a renaissance man who had mastered several diverse areas of interest. He graduated from Washington State University in 1970 with a degree in pharmacy and graduated from the University of Washington in 1974 with an MBA. He went on to law school at Gonzaga University, graduating in 1979, and then earned an LL.M. in taxation from the University of Florida in 1980. After practicing law for four years in Spokane, Washington, Professor Slagle moved to Vermillion to teach at the University of South Dakota School of Law. Over the next 22 years, he taught hundreds of students, prompting many to pursue careers in the field of tax law and instilling in all a respect for the tax code.

Students know that great teachers encompass two core qualities: they possess a complete understanding of the material they teach, and they thrive on connecting with students and supporting them through the learning process. Professor Slagle epitomized both of these rare qualities throughout his time at USD. He twice received the Jackson Memorial Award, nominated by his students for this honor given to an outstanding faculty member at the School of Law. The dedications below indicate that Professor Slagle was known as an educator who loved interacting with and inspiring his students – in fact, he kept teaching throughout much of the treatment for the aggressive brain tumor which eventually took his life. His love for tax law was also widely-known, and Professor Slagle consistently held tax class over past the dismissal time, taking every opportunity to share with students the intricacies of the tax code. While an enthusiasm for tax law may be enigmatic to many, Professor Slagle saw the impact that income tax law has on regular people and sought to share his passion for it with his students.

Beyond the Law School, Professor Slagle had a deep commitment to his community that went beyond words, made evident by his actions and activism. He was elected to serve on the Vermillion City Council; he served as the Vice-President to the South Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America until just a few months before his death; and he played many roles at Trinity Lutheran Church in Vermillion, including president, deacon, and leader in the church's prison ministries. At the University of South Dakota, Professor

Slagle served as the longest-running chair of the University Senate and served many years as the Law School's representative to that body. He served on countless other boards and committees as a member of the USD community. He even volunteered as a clown with the Sioux Falls Shriners – calling himself Chipper the Clown. Finally, he loved his family and friends dearly, and his generous and compassionate spirit was cherished by his wife, his two daughters, and many family and friends. These examples provide just a small picture of the myriad ways Professor Slagle contributed to his community – a term he defined broadly to include his family and friends, his church, the law school, the university, the city of Vermillion, and the people here in South Dakota and beyond.

Even from his hospital bed, Professor Slagle managed to share his depth of knowledge in the field of tax law. A short time before his death, his good friend Professor Mike Myers phoned him from his Health Law and Policy class to inquire about the tax implication of something which arose in class discussion. After teasing that his friend always asked the easy questions, Professor Slagle shared the answer, explaining the complicated concept in terms everyone could understand. This story is reflective of Professor Slagle's sense of humor, passion for others, and strength of spirit, just as the dedications that follow are reflective of so many people's deepest feelings toward this great man and his legacy that continues.

PAMELA R. BOLLWEG[†]

Professor Frank Slagle taught Income Tax and a host of other courses to hundreds of students over his twenty-two years as a teacher at the University of South Dakota School of Law. Frank was passionate about his students' education, which was evident in the high level of energy in every class period he taught. Particularly in Income Tax, he brought enthusiasm and understanding to an area of the law that many people fear because of its complexity and ramifications. He knew every minute detail of the tax code, and yet he was able to teach us the broader picture in addition to the specifics of the code. His enthusiasm for learning was contagious and inspired his students to strive for a better understanding of the law. As a student in Professor Slagle's classroom, one felt confident that even if you didn't answer his questions correctly, he would turn the situation into a learning experience. And his sense of humor always kept us wondering when the next joke was coming.

Maintaining a connection to members of the bar was important to Professor Slagle. Each year the Law School Committee of the State Bar of South Dakota meets at the Law School with the administration, faculty and students. Professor Slagle always came to these annual meetings prepared to share an important message to the members of the bar – whether it be that the law students needed additional training in technology or to remind us what an incredible education he believed the law students were receiving for their dollar at the USD School of

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Law. I remember one meeting in particular where he was recovering from a recent surgery; when many would have been home recuperating, he made a special effort to attend our Committee's lunch with the faculty to share his concerns and participate in our discussions.

Professor Slagle believed so strongly in the value of our education that he assured us the reason for the volume of our daily assignments was to be certain we were getting our money's worth. Despite the lengthy daily assignments, we respected Professor Slagle because he always showed respect for us as individuals. He was incredibly dedicated to his life as a professor, dedication which did not end when we graduated. After graduation, Professor Slagle was excited to hear from us, whether it be to hear how we were doing on a personal level or to help resolve a difficult legal question. Professor Slagle was one of the most genuine, caring people I know, and we were all blessed as students to have such a wonderful and talented person to lead us in gaining a better understanding of the law and the meaning of living life to the fullest.

CHRIS HUTTON[†]

Frank Slagle relished the fact that he was a little "quirky." He recognized that the combination of tax law professor, pharmacist, wood-worker, political junkie, city councilman, USD Senate representative, pro bono attorney, Lutheran church leader, Shriner's clown, and technophile was a bit unusual, but he enjoyed having eclectic interests. Asking questions and thoroughly discussing all issues were second nature to him. With the tenacity that many lawyers would envy, he stayed with the lawsuit, tax problem, or student who was having difficulty, until he had exhausted all efforts. His focus and energy were intense and yielded innumerable benefits.

Frank's expertise in the Tax and Business Law fields were apparent to all. He was recognized as a strong teacher who garnered the respect and confidence of his colleagues. His performance and ability were integral to the superior educational experience USD Law School endeavors to provide. Frank exhibited compassion and good humor toward his students. Patiently and persistently, he guided them through dense sections of the Internal Revenue Code. Tax classes were inevitably followed by group sessions in his office where students could sense his respect for them as he tried to help them. Frank was the kind of teacher described by Parker Palmer in *The Courage to Teach* – each day, Frank was "grateful" that he had had another chance to be in the classroom and work with students. Students were not the only recipients of Frank's generosity at the Law School. He undertook to bring the entire school, including faculty and staff, into the computer age. He understood that recalcitrant colleagues would embrace the technological age if he could only take a minute of their time to show them why the Internet was not only the coming thing, but also interesting and educational. When he showed me webcam photos of ancient cave paintings in France for the first time, I was hooked! Frank was invaluable in assisting the Law School and university with all aspects of technology.

[†] Professor, University of South Dakota School of Law.

In speaking about Frank to my classes after his death, I mentioned that his motivation so often was, "What can I do to make things better for the other guy?" Whether as a teacher who was generous with his time, or as a colleague trying to comfort his co-workers by joking about losing his hair and by wearing silly hats during his cancer treatment, his focus was on "the other guy." Frank's spirit is with us as we not only keep the other guy in mind, but also remember Frank's quick grin, the twinkle in his eye, his mind racing, and his computer keys clicking. The Law School has lost a dedicated teacher, whose wit, intelligence and enthusiasm (and quirks) will not be replaced.

BISHOP ANDREA DEGROOT-NESDAHL[†]

Frank Slagle served as Vice-President of the South Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for eight years (1998—2006). That's the maximum number of years an individual can serve in that role, which is the highest elected office for a layperson in the Synod. As Vice-President he chaired meetings of the Synod Council and shared in chairing the annual Synod Assembly. His knowledge of parliamentary procedure was undebatable, and our meetings were examples of that skill. But the thing that was more impressive than those parliamentary skills was his passion for our ministry.

Frank served in leadership at his home congregation, Trinity Lutheran in Vermillion. He served on the Lutheran Campus Ministry Coordinating Committee of our Synod, underscoring his deep appreciation for ministry to students and the whole academic community on our college campuses. He served the larger church while a Synod Vice-President as a voting member to several ELCA church-wide assemblies and as part of a task force to pull together a manual to help synod officers in their work. Perhaps his most visible service was through the role of Synod Vice-President, but it certainly wasn't his only service. All of this demonstrates that Frank loved his church, and he served it in any and every way he could.

Frank was a man of deep and thoughtful faith. His interest in theology and the traditions of the church was evident in his curiosity, and he had an unbelievable ability to remember everything he had ever been taught about such things. When Frank led a meeting with devotions, it was always an engaging time of sharing his own personal spiritual walk as well as an occasion to proclaim Jesus as the center of his life and our church. A man of extensive education and impressive vocabulary, he could communicate the greatest treasures of theology in the most straightforward and simple constructs: Jesus loves me; God loves us all; God's grace bubbles out of us in service and giving. Frank shared his thoughtful faith readily and in a way that inspired those around him to engage their own faith more deeply.

I've been privileged to work with many wonderful people, true saints of the church, while serving as Bishop of the South Dakota Synod. Frank Slagle will always be one of those true saints of the church in my experience. It was my distinct privilege to know him as friend and colleague in serving our church and

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