True Sooner Ted

David Swank, *University of Oklahoma College of Law*
In 2006, Theodore Price Roberts, better known to everyone as Ted, retired after serving on the College of Law Faculty for thirty-seven years. Ted has dedicated his life as a member of the faculty to teaching his students about the courtroom and how to be an ethical attorney, while at the same time being a vigorous advocate for one’s client. The Phillips Courtroom at the College of Law was “his” courtroom and woe to the faculty member or staff member who tried to use the courtroom when Ted wanted it for Practice Court or Trial Advocacy. The Practice Court class was Ted’s Court of Law. His students learned that, as in any courtroom, preparation was expected and excuses were seldom tolerated. Ted believed that students could not learn trial advocacy just sitting in a classroom chair. Instead, advocacy was to be learned on one’s feet while addressing the judge or a jury. His students have often returned to praise the advocacy techniques and skills they learned in his classes.

Ted is a real Sooner. He started his undergraduate education at OU in 1957, and except for five years after his graduation from the College of Law when he served as a prosecuting attorney in the state courts in southwest Oklahoma, he has been at OU either as a student or faculty member. Ted started his service at the College of Law as the Assistant Dean in 1969. After three years, he moved to the College of Law’s Legal Aid Clinic where served first as the Assistant Director, and then in 1975 he became Director of the Clinic. He served as its Director for fourteen years. During this time, his students who were licensed to practice under the Rules of the Oklahoma Supreme Court received direct supervision from Ted. Either he or his Assistant Director always accompanied his students to the courtrooms where the students learned first-hand trial advocacy skills in an actual courtroom in an actual case. In 1989, Ted left the clinic and moved to the full time teaching of trial advocacy skills courses, which he continued to teach until his retirement in 2006. In recognition of his outstanding service to the College of Law, the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents named Ted as the Edith Kinney Gaylord Presidential Professor of Law in 2001.

The College of Law, together with the University of Oklahoma Center for Continuing Education, created a summer institute for trial advocacy for young lawyers. From 1988 to 1997, the program was conducted by the College of Law. Ted served as the program’s Dean. In 1998, the program was coordinated with the College of Continuing Education and Ted served as the Director of the Graduate School for Successful Trial Advocacy until 2006. This program provided excellent trial advocacy skills for several hundred young lawyers who participated in the training.

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Ted not only taught advocacy at our College of Law; he had an outstanding national reputation teaching trial advocacy for the National Institute for Trial Advocacy. His service carried him from New York to Texas and from Florida to California. During most of that time, he was one of the team leaders for the advocacy classes, teaching both young and more experienced lawyers the skill of lawyering in the courtroom.

Ted was and is a true “athletic fan” of Oklahoma University sports. He has not missed an OU–Texas football game since he started attending those games as a student in 1957, and he has seldom missed any of the Sooner football games since that time. Sooner basketball is also at the top of his list, and most homes games have found him sitting in the basketball stands, from the old Field House to the Lloyd Noble Arena. Not only would Ted attend the games of football and basketball, but, if the games were on television, he would set his VCR to record the game so he could review each official’s call after the game. Often if the call had gone against OU, he would report on the official’s mistake in the days following the game.

At an earlier time, there was much more interest among the law faculty to attend the OU–Texas football game in Dallas. Many of the faculty and their spouses would travel to Dallas by chartered bus to attend the game. The bus made the trip much safer and allowed for an occasional bit of liquid refreshment before the bus arrived at the Cotton Bowl for the game. Ted was always an active participant in arranging for the bus transportation, the refreshments, and a dinner in Dallas after the game. The liquid refreshment was often a “secret punch” provided by Ted, which usually included some form of scotch whiskey. In more recent years, the bus trip has faded into the past, but Ted and a few die-hard faculty members still make the annual pilgrimage to Dallas. However, now that Ted has a son practicing medicine in Dallas and two grandchildren there as well (and another one on the way), he often goes to Dallas early and misses not the game, but the trip to Big ‘D’ for the game.

Ted and his wonderful wife Marilyn are extremely proud of their two children. His daughter, Mary Ann, is a graduate of the College of Law and is presently an Assistant Attorney General for the state of Oklahoma. His son, John Paul, is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine and is an obstetrician in Dallas.

Ted has provided a tremendous service to the College of Law for almost four decades. His love and devotion to the College of Law are what made him an outstanding teacher of young men and women. His legacy as a teacher will live on through many students who passed through his classroom and learned their advocacy skills from him.