Haiku for Mike Roche

Frank Pommersheim, University of South Dakota School of Law
Despite the fact that Mike would many times be “mauled” by his students after and in between classes peppering him with questions, Mike was always willing to spend his precious personal time with his students, either to answer any questions they had or to provide invaluable advice. He sincerely and genuinely cares about each and every student. Teaching is not just a job to Mike. It is an art and an avocation.

In the words of Anatole France, “The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards.” Learning from Mike was simultaneously fun and intellectually stimulating. He caused you to desire to learn more. He has certainly awakened the natural curiosity in legions of his students. It is a curiosity I still carry with me today.

Brilliant, witty, passionate, caring, charismatic, and many other adjectives too numerous to mention describe Mike Roche. I will always treasure the time I spent close to him. Thanks, Mike, for everything.

FRANK POMMERSHEIM†

Haiku for Mike Roche to be Published in the South Dakota Law Review

Teacher, father, friend
we walk that Road together
in shit and sunshine!

VINCENT MICHAEL ROCHE†

As an undergraduate, I was privileged to have Mike as a professor for three classes, so one of the names by which I know him is “Dr. Roche.” Primarily, however, I know him simply as “Pa.”

Most people who know my dad can attest that he does not do anything half way. Even though he’s been teaching at the U for over 30 years, he has yet to cancel a class on the afternoon of the day before a holiday break, or just “hand out the syllabus” at the first class of the semester. In fact, one of my most vivid memories from early childhood is of the last time he called off a class on account of his own illness – over 20 years ago. Although I’ve benefitted from my dad’s all-out approach to teaching, of far greater value to me is his all-out approach to being my father. I could give thousands of examples of his tenacious approach to fatherhood, but just a few should suffice. 14

† Frank Pommersheim is a Professor of Law at the University of South Dakota School of Law.
† Mr. Roche is an attorney at Novack and Macey in Chicago, IL. He graduated from Augustana College in 2000 and received his J.D. from the University of Virginia in 2003. Upon graduation, he was elected to the Order of the Coif.
14. By way of (loving) disclaimer, I should point out that my dad’s determination hasn’t always inured to my benefit. For example, for years I drove a beat-up Toyota pickup worth, at most, $500. It broke down frequently, but he poured thousands of dollars into maintenance and repairs just to keep it running – primarily, I tend to think, so he could continue chuckling at the sight of it kerplunking down the driveway with me at the controls. I tried numerous times (in vain) to explain the cost-ineffectiveness of his approach to him, but, in the words of my late Grandpa, Phil Roche, “a wink is as good as a nod to