A PERSONAL REMEMBRANCE

Leslie Reicin Stein∗

I knew Gary Vause for almost twenty-eight years. I respected and admired him as a teacher, a scholar, an administrator, a colleague, a mediator, an arbitrator, a builder, a visionary, and most of all, as a friend. But this was not always true.

In the fall of 1975, Dean Vause came to Stetson University College of Law to assume the administrative duties of the Assistant Dean and to teach labor and employment law. He left a small law practice in Connecticut, where he specialized in representing management on labor and employment law issues. Because he had aspirations of becoming a prominent labor arbitrator, he believed that a short stretch as a law school dean would enable him to be perceived by both management and labor as a neutral. He also saw his new status as an opportunity to publish in the field, thereby increasing his stature for his burgeoning arbitration practice. He chose Florida, as he had family and property in the State, and it would enable him to visit both. Little did he know that being Dean of Stetson would turn out to be his life’s aspiration and the most fulfilling career he could imagine.

In addition to his administrative duties, Dean Vause taught two courses, Labor Law and Non-Litigative Dispute Settlement Seminar during his first semester at Stetson. At that time, the law school was not the student—or family—friendly, supportive place it is today. My son Michael—now an attorney—was born in

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Ms. Stein was Editor in Chief of the Stetson Law Review and received the Moot Court and Walter Mann Awards. She was President of the National History Honorary at the University of South Florida, and recipient of the Karl Kreher Award as the Outstanding M.B.A. Graduate at the University of Tampa. Ms. Stein is a member of the Stetson Board of Overseers and President of the Dana Foundation. Her Bar activities include President of the Florida & Hillsborough Associations for Women Lawyers, Vice President of the National Conference of Women’s Bar Associations, the editorial board of the Florida Bar Journal, and membership on several Executive Councils of The Florida Bar. Her community activities include Chair of the City of Tampa Civil Service Board, Vice Chair of the National Executive Board of the National Conference for Community & Justice, the Children’s Home Board, the Davis Island Civic Association Board, and the Athena Society.
July 1975. Although I was Editor in Chief of the Stetson Law Review, several faculty members had counseled that I should drop out of school, as balancing motherhood and the practice of law would be extremely difficult. Despite this advice, I enrolled in both of Dean Vause’s courses, not because I had any interest in the field, but because it would enable me not to have to commute to St. Petersburg from Tampa on Wednesdays and Fridays, and I could spend the days with Michael. This schedule enabled me to take six courses, spend time at the Law Review, and be a full-time mother several days of the week. After the first week of classes, when the drop period was over, Dean Vause announced that he had been selected as an arbitrator on several cases that necessitated changing the time of our classes to the free hours or evenings on other days on an as-needed basis. Needless to say, Dean Vause and I spent many hours during the semester in Dean Richard T. Dillon’s office, arguing about class schedule changes and the attendance policy. We finally settled on my nonattendance at the rescheduled classes and his not imposing the attendance policy on my absences. This was not a satisfactory conclusion, but it would enable me to graduate if I could pass despite my less-than-stellar attendance. As grading was anonymous, Dean Vause was shocked later on to discover that I had won the American Jurisprudence Book Award in both of his classes. He was so surprised that he came to visit me at the University of South Florida, where I was employed as the Associate General Counsel following graduation. He demanded to know how I had studied to “book” his courses and what I intended to do with my career. This meeting began a collegial relationship that we enjoyed until his death. Over the next few months, he asked me to assist him in rewriting the curriculum for the two courses to make them more relevant. He also adjusted his arbitration schedule so that his class schedule took precedence. I was extremely impressed as he listened and changed his priorities to benefit students.

Early in his career at Stetson, Dean Vause recognized that, if he was going to make teaching his priority, he needed to obtain the highest academic credentials. As a consequence, he took a leave of absence and attained his Master of Laws (LL.M.) and Doctor of Juristic Science (S.J.D.) degrees from the University of Virginia. He also worked at the Labor Center at Florida State University College of Law.
When he returned to Stetson, Dean Vause quickly realized that, for Stetson to increase its stature in the academic community, it needed to develop Centers of Excellence. He created the Center for Excellence in Dispute Resolution (Center). He invited leaders in the legal community throughout Florida to serve on its board, sponsored conferences with national speakers, and published monographs on current topics. To promote Stetson and this Center, he assumed leadership roles in The Florida Bar, the American Bar Association, the Industrial Research Relations Association, and the National Academy of Arbitrators. As these leaders became invested in Stetson’s future, they volunteered to teach specialized topics to supplement the law curriculum, provided internships in their offices, contributed money, and helped prepare students for moot court competitions. He also established relationships with federal and state agencies and convinced them to offer special seminars on campus for students and practicing attorneys. These actions improved the quality of education at Stetson, increased the stature of Stetson in the legal community, provided a service to the bar, and helped develop a loyal volunteer and contributor base.

During the 1980s, Dean Vause became a well-respected arbitrator. I had the privilege of appearing before him on many occasions, because by then I was Labor Counsel for GTE Florida—now Verizon. Cary R. Singletary, who was then Union counsel, and I regularly taught courses at Stetson, and we were both active in the Center. We convinced our clients that Dean Vause could admirably serve as both an impartial arbitrator and mediator to our disputes. He became so admired by both GTE and the Union for the conduct of the hearings and his well-reasoned decisions that when GTE established a new company, both management and union officials consented to have Dean Vause conduct an election of the bargaining-unit employees.

In 1984, in response to a request for a Women’s Studies program at the Law School, I worked with Dean Vause to develop the curriculum for a course on Women in the Law, and I was its first adjunct professor.

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In the late 1980s, Dean Vause’s interest increasingly focused on international law and the interplay between labor and international law. As he was fluent in Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish, and had some working knowledge of Russian, he was able to travel extensively and lecture in Brazil, China, and in the countries of the former Soviet Union. As I had now become General Counsel of GTE Data Services—now Verizon Data Services—and we were licensing software throughout the world—we used Dean Vause as a consultant on many of our ventures. In fact, in our contract with Portugal Telecom we listed him as our choice for an arbitrator if disputes arose. He freely gave his time and his talent and enjoyed working with different cultures. The relationships he developed with lawyers, faculty, and community leaders enabled him to establish foreign study and exchange programs and the LL.M. program in International Law and Business.

In 1999, Dean Vause contacted me regarding an impending vacancy for the position of Stetson’s dean because Dean Lizabeth A. Moody was resigning to return to teaching. Dean Vause informed me that he intended to apply for the position and asked if I would write a letter of recommendation for him. He advised me that becoming the dean would be the culmination of his career, and he believed that his diverse experience had prepared him to take Stetson to the next level. I was honored to write a recommendation to the search committee and to participate in the dean selection as a member of the Board of Overseers. The support for his selection by members of the faculty, administration, alumni, students, and community was overwhelming.

In the few short years he had as Dean, he served Stetson well. He established the new Tampa Law Center and Campus, launched the part-time program, and expanded the joint JD/MBA, the LL.M., and the summer study-abroad programs. He discovered that he was a highly effective fundraiser and that he was able to attract colleagues who were inspired by his vision.

Dean Vause may have come to Stetson with a view toward a temporary stay to enhance his career as an arbitrator, but he became an outstanding teacher, scholar, and the epitome of excellence as a dean. We shall all miss him, and are better for having known him. Most of all, I will miss him as a mentor, a colleague, and a friend.
John Long, Suzanne Long, Chad Strickland, Daniel Long, and Dean W. Gary Vause at Stetson University College of Law Commencement Ceremony
GariAnn Vause and Dean W. Gary Vause at Stetson University College of Law Commencement Ceremony in December 1990