

CALVIN A. KUENZEL: TREASURED COLLEAGUE, LEGENDARY PROFESSOR*

Dean Lizabeth A. Moody**

*Of studie took he most cure and most hede,
Noght o word spak he more than was nede,
And that was seyð in forme and reverence,
And short and quik, and ful of hy sentence.
Souninge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.*

Geoffrey Chaucer
*The Canterbury Tales*¹

Calvin Kuenzel was a treasured colleague. For forty years he was an integral part of the Stetson University College of Law — through all of its ups and downs he was there: the scholar, the teacher, the icon representing the best in legal education. Born in Iowa on the Fourth of July, 1928, Cal was educated at the University of Iowa and at the University of Illinois where he first engaged in law teaching. He arrived at Stetson in 1958 and here he, for the most part, stayed. He *took* to teaching, to the life of the academy, and to Florida. A master of the Socratic method, he always answered a question with a question. When asked what he taught, he replied “students.” A legendary teacher, students never forgot his classes. They relived their experiences with Professor Kuenzel at every reunion. The College only needed to announce his presence at a function to assure a large attendance.

Any law school dean would have wanted a few clones of him on the faculty. He did it all and volunteered for more. A great teacher, a good scholar, a role model and mentor for both students and faculty,

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1. GEOFFREY CHAUCER, *THE CANTERBURY TALES* 15 (Walter W. Skeat ed., Random House 1937) (1386).

he never said “no” to any assignment. Only a few weeks before his death, he came to my office offering to teach evening classes if we were to open an evening division in Tampa.

Cal was the perennial chair of the Admissions Committee and admitted most of the students who have attended the school since its move to Gulfport. He was able to judge a potential student for who he or she could become and then to guide him or her to fulfill that promise which Cal had divined from the first encounter. The complete scholar, he left behind a solid body of scholarship as well as a portfolio filled with service and teaching, but in the classroom he reached his true calling. Few could match him.

I met Calvin Kuenzel when I came to Stetson as Dean — only four years prior to his death, but I felt that I had been his friend all my life. He became my mentor, my best help, and my trusted advisor. Few occasions during my tenure have been as pleasant as those days when I joined Cal and other faculty members for lunch in the Faculty Dining Room exchanging news, views, and general banter. It easily passed for the Senior Commons at an Oxford College. Cal encouraged me, supported me through difficult times, and laughed with me on happy occasions. I miss his sense of humor and his genius each day. I found that he and I shared a vision of legal education that many might think outdated. He saw law school as an opportunity to toughen the minds and strengthen the character of those who came to study with him. He cajoled them, admonished them, challenged them, and taught them how to be lawyers — good lawyers.

The words engraved on a plaque left in my office by an anonymous donor a few days after Cal's death capture much of the essence of Professor Calvin Kuenzel. It says:

In memory of Professor Calvin Kuenzel. “What are you?” A question asked by Professor Kuenzel of first-year law students taking his course in Contracts. One student arrived at this answer long after the question was asked and after much thought. “I am my word.” Professor Kuenzel taught us more than the law — he taught us how to live it.

Calvin Kuenzel cannot be replaced in our hearts or in our memories. He will forever be a living part of Stetson, of the students he taught, and the colleagues he touched. He is the molder of much

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of what Stetson University College of Law is today and what it will be tomorrow.