

ONE LIFE IN ETERNITY

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One person's life is a flash in eternity, but if that life touches the hearts and minds of many people, it becomes eternity itself. A human being who unselfishly shares his knowledge, experience, and wisdom, and who devotes his life to service is a remarkable example of humanity. This special and remarkable person, whose contributions will transcend his lifetime, was Dean W. Gary Vause. He embodied humanity, wisdom, moral values, knowledge, and intelligence. He impacted and enlightened my life. He taught me to be strong, supported me through difficult times, and guided me with kindness and wisdom throughout the difficult maze of the American legal system and the English language.

I have spent hours thinking of ways to begin this Essay and how to articulately express my feelings of the tragic loss of my mentor and a very special friend, Gary Vause. I have continued to stare at a blank piece of paper, and I have realized that no words will even come close to describing the exemplary personality, professionalism, and humanity of Gary. I still find each word not expressive enough, each sentence not strong enough to express my admiration, gratitude, and respect to a man I think very highly of; a man I have always looked up to in my life and career. I am utterly grateful for everything he taught me about the American legal system, international law, and alternative dispute resolution. His extraordinary example has guided me through my professional career and development and has helped me become a better attorney and a better person.

Looking back, I know that I would not have become the person I am today without Gary's tremendous influence on my life. I have always been very thankful for his friendship, guidance, support, and encouragement. I will always remember him for every-

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thing he was: a brilliant scholar and attorney, as well as a dear friend who will be missed.

I had the opportunity to personally express my gratitude and admiration to Gary while he was still alive. I wanted him to know the true impact that he had on my life. I let him know how his friendship, guidance, and support have played a major role in my development as an attorney. On occasion, I have found myself in difficult situations, and I would think, "How would Gary handle this?" When I shared with him my professional difficulties, success stories, and failures, I always found a word of congratulation, encouragement, or advice. During my study at Stetson University College of Law, I freely took advantage of his "open door" policy, which continued after my graduation in the slightly modified form of an "open phone" policy.

I had the honor to work with Gary on two publications concerning foreign investments and labor and employment issues. *Business Law Guide: Bulgaria* was a comprehensive and authoritative guide for business persons, lawyers, and other people interested in the opportunities for doing business in Bulgaria.¹ The second publication was a chapter on Bulgaria's Labor Law in the American Bar Association Section of Labor and Employment.² We spent endless hours in discussion, comparing the civil-law and the common-law systems. I will always keep very special memories of this challenging educational experience.

Gary's scholastic talent and superb teaching skills have contributed tremendously to the development of the American legal system and the legal systems of other countries. His deep knowledge of international business law, in addition to proficiency in several languages, made him an extremely valuable and recognized scholar in the international arena. He contributed tremendously to the development of Stetson as one of the best law schools in the United States; Stetson continues to educate some of the best lawyers. Until his last days, he devoted his talent and heart to the Stetson community and our society. Opening a part-time law program was a dream come true for Gary. He devoted hours and hours to planning and implementing this idea. A draw-

1. W. Gary Vause & Kalina Sarmova, *Business Law Guide: Bulgaria* (BookWorld Publications 1997).

2. ABA Sec. Lab. & Empl., *International Labor and Employment Laws* vol. II, 14-1 (William L. Keller et al., BNA Books 2001).

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ing of the new campus was displayed in his office, and every time I asked about its development, his face lit up with pride and a sense of accomplishment.

Someone once said, “You only live once, but if you do it right, you can live forever.”³ Gary is no longer with us, but he will live forever in our hearts and minds. In honor of his exemplary life, we should continue to uphold high standards of professionalism, ethics, and humanity.

3. Xplore, Inc., *Brainy Quote*, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/maewest109701.html> (accessed Sept. 5, 2003) (attributing this quote to Mae West).



Dean W. Gary Vause instructing students at the Beijing School of Economics on International Business Transactions