

REMEMBERING CAL

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"Maybe you can tell us about that case . . . Mr. Carter."

Covered with sweat, I sat bolt-upright in bed, breathing heavily after the nightmare. For a second, the apprehension of tomorrow's big hearing was gone. It was fall semester, 1969, in Contracts I, and Professor Calvin A. Kuenzel, known as "Cal," had called on me. Ahead was the possibility of forty-five minutes of questions by him and hopefully satisfactory responses from me.

He had an uncanny talent for getting inside a student's mind. If you could think on your feet and carry a good exchange with him, you were safe.

A law student whose mind went blank or even worse, had not grasped the issues of the case, was tersely given a few verbal body slams and allowed to sit down as Professor Kuenzel silently made an appropriate notation. He would call on the student again, who had better be ready. Like a predatory small animal, he instinctively knew the elements of a case which had eluded a student.

The adage was, "You never win with Cal, you come out even."

A friend of mine, after enduring almost a full class period on his feet was left pumped so full of adrenaline that he was sleepless that night.

After getting through Contracts I and II, I knew I was going to be a lawyer. Other Professors were top-notch, but none could get inside your head like Cal. During each exchange, you were aware of the depth and scope of his knowledge and his perception of a case. Years later, I got to know him in committee work as the low-key, laconic family man he was. Calling him "Cal" then was a hard-earned privilege, though it sounded like "your honor" out of respect.

His dry wit is best recalled when, as assistant Dean, he interviewed a hapless student with four F's and a D at the end of the first

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semester. "I think I see your problem. You spent too much time on one subject."

Never mean, loud, or personal, Professor Kuenzel could shatter an unprepared or simply hapless law student with a few words. Someone who did well in a discourse was allowed to sit down, running away like a roped horse voluntarily released.

Other law professors had reputations. Professor Kuenzel had a mystique.

As students and later as graduates, we speculated that he would become an appellate judge or even a supreme court justice, considering his outstanding academic credentials and reputation. Then, I realized he would have none of it, having found his calling as a law professor of the first rank. Why should he have to convince one other judge on a three-judge appellate court panel when behind his lectern he was judge, jury and court all in one.

In looking back, no judge or opposing counsel has ever intimidated me as much as Cal in Contracts I and II. Whenever I think of Stetson, he will forever be behind the lectern in an air-conditioned classroom in a sun-baked building surrounded by palm trees, a man who found his calling teaching law until the day he died.