



LAWRENCE P. WILKINS

Indiana Law Review

Volume 43

2010

Number 2

TRIBUTES

A LETTER FROM GERALD L. BEPKO* AND HIS WIFE, JEAN,** IN CELEBRATION OF SHARON AND LAWRENCE P. WILKINS WHO HAVE BEEN FRIENDS FOR TWENTY-NINE YEARS

Dear Sharon and Larrie,

It seems like yesterday that we met, but it was more than twenty-nine years ago. That was when we recruited you, Larrie, from your appointment at the University of Akron. At that time Tom Read was Law Dean, I was Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and both of us, along with the faculty, were excited about your appointment.

Your academic work at Akron was excellent and you earned an appointment there with tenure in the regular course. Moreover, we didn't have as many lateral hires in those days and your experience seemed just right for IU at Indianapolis.

Not only were we attracted to your academic portfolio in 1979-80 including articles in places like the University of Cincinnati, Cleveland State, *Family Law Quarterly* and *Land and Water Law Review*, but you seemed to achieve excellence in your engagement with Ohio's professional community and in the larger communities in the population centers served by the University of Akron. Of particular interest was your work in the interconnections between law, health, and medicine. Among other things, you had organized and served as a panelist at a program for the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine on the "Moral/Ethical Issues in Modern Health Care: The Balance of Risks in Research." These strengths fit well with our Law School's long standing links with the Indiana University (IU) School of Medicine and our growing ambitions in Health Law.

On top of all this there were some common experiences that you and I shared by way of an LL.M. program and previous teaching experience in a multi-division law school. Finally we were all struck by your very serious, thoughtful approach to your fields of study.

* Former Interim President of Indiana University, 2003; Indiana University-Purdue University—Indianapolis (IUPUI) Chancellor Emeritus, Indiana University Trustees, Professor and Professor of Law; former Dean of the Indiana University School of Law—Indianapolis, 1981-86.

Gerald L. Bepko and his wife, Jean, sent this letter on November 15, 2008, to Sharon and Lawrence P. Wilkins on the occasion of his retirement from the Indiana University School of Law—Indianapolis. It has been expanded to include a few additional thoughts and is being resent as part of the tribute to Professor Wilkins.

** Jean Bepko served as Special Assistant in the Office of the Chancellor of IUPUI and in the Office of the President of Indiana University.

Thereafter, Larrie, we worked together at the School for about six years. During five of those years I was the dean which, because of schedule demands, made it more difficult to have the kinds of relationships that colleagues with similar backgrounds would normally develop. Still, I remember fondly the times we had together including your debut as a player of some considerable skill on the faculty touch football team; although, as I recall, by the time you joined the faculty the game had passed me by or, to put it more charitably, I was on injured reserve.

After 1986 when I joined the IUPUI administration ("University"), I saw less of you on campus, but kept abreast of the School through Jeff and then Norm. They commented often on the leadership role you naturally assumed and how important you were to the success of the academic program. As a leader among faculty you took your share of the executive assignments such as Associate Dean and, reflecting your interest in new technologies, as webmaster and Director of Legal Management Systems.

From a vantage point in the University administration I observed your external work develop in Indiana just the way it had in Ohio. You did your fair share of high quality continuing legal education work for the Indiana bar and you continued your work on the interface between law and health. Your interest in technology has also been visible from afar, especially your long involvement with the National Center for Computer Assisted Legal Instruction where you've served since 1997 on the Board of Editors. Also of interest was your leadership in the Symposium issue of the Indiana Law Review in 1997 on "Law and Technology in the New Millennium: Closing the Gap."

One special event in your life came to my attention in the first or second year that I was chancellor. It came to me in the form of a request for a sabbatical leave which you spent as a Visiting Professor at Monash University in Australia. This overseas venture enriched and added an international dimension to your already formidable teaching repertoire. It also continued in fine fashion the links our faculty have had with Monash University.

Another very special dimension of your work was visible to all in the University administration. You have served in extremely able fashion on the University's Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects. This was a very important function of the University when you became a member of the Review Board in 1988, and it became even more important over the years as the human subject issues became more complex. Your work became increasingly important as the number of complex cases from the School of Medicine increased, the volume of research activity expanded dramatically, and there was an enormous growth in resources devoted to research. This continues to be one of the most important areas in which we must achieve excellence, and your long service of more than twenty years, and the leadership you provided, have been very important to our success.

Along the way I've also heard from your former students what a deep and positive impression you've made in the profession. Being out in the larger community I sometimes heard more about the School than when I was dean, because people saw me as independent of the School. You should be proud of the way people think of you in this state.

My respect for you and the fond recollections of our time together as law faculty were part of the reason I was so pleased to join the “reading group” of elder, mostly retired, faculty that includes you, Jim Torke, Jeff Grove, and Paul Cox. It has been uplifting and enjoyable to be a part of this group with you and I was especially taken by the book by Robert Nagel that you suggested for the session we had just before I first wrote this letter in November 2008.

While I didn’t see you at the Law School very much over the years, Larrie, Jean and I did see both of you at St. Luke’s United Methodist Church. Larrie, you and I have sat together many times, even in the last month or two, at the Sunday services. Of course all at St. Luke’s have seen and heard you, Sharon, in the New Song Ensemble.

For me one of the most memorable musical moments at St. Luke’s—a church known for the excellence of its music—was when New Song performed a wonderful adaptation of the traditional hymn titled “Morning has Broken,” a hymn introduced into popular culture by Cat Stevens in 1971. The New Song adaptation is much better than the Stevens’ version although both are moving.

Sharon, you’ve also come into our lives by way of your wonderful work as a second grade teacher at the Fox Hill School. Jean was a teacher’s assistant in reading in your classroom at the Fox Hill School for a number of years and holds those teaching experiences to be among her most cherished along with her twenty-six years of teaching in the St. Luke’s Sunday School. From her experience in your School and in your class room, Sharon, Jean, and I have come to admire you very much. If Larrie’s following among alumni of the Law School is to be eclipsed in any way it would be by the following of your former students and their grateful parents and grandparents.

I’ll bet you’ve had the same experience as Jean and I when out at dinner or in some other public space in Indianapolis. Someone we don’t immediately recognize will approach our table with the intent of saying hello. At least as often as it involves some aspect of our work in the University, and perhaps more often, it is a parent, grandparent, or especially a former student of Jean’s who will say something like, “Mrs. Bepko, I was in your Sunday School class at St. Luke’s.”

Both Jean and I hope that we’ll see more of you now that you’re moving to the next stage of life. Of course we both hope that this next stage is particularly joyful and that you and your family are as happy as it is possible to be.

Sincerely,
Jerry Bepko in collaboration with his partner of
forty-one years, Jean Bepko

