
**IN MEMORIAM:
A TRIBUTE TO STANLEY E. HARPER, JR.**

*Barbara G. Watts**

I heard a recent song by Tim McGraw called *Good-Bye, My Old Friend*. The title of the song brought to mind Stanley Ellis Harper, Jr., who passed away on March 17, 2006. I will always remember him as a teacher, a romantic, and a great sport.

Stan was a great teacher. I first laid eyes on him in 1975 when he was my professor for Torts. To be honest, I did not know quite what to make of him. I mean, really, who explains law using odd expressions, like “Mao Tse Tung great leap forward” and “running left-handed catch in the deepening shadows of center field on the warning track”? As the semester progressed, I warmed to Professor Harper, as did all my classmates. His sense of humor and his way of making the complicated understandable was a highlight of that first law school semester.

Eventually his odd expressions took on meaning, and we collected them, as have all Harper students over the years. When he retired, Ken Kreider and Mike Morley (Class of 1989) compiled “A Dictionary of Harperisms,” including these favorites:

- Cecil B. DeMille Cast of Thousands—a lawsuit with a large number of parties
- Harold C. Cranchford—a mythical “everyman,” often on the receiving end of tortious acts (also the alter-ego of Professor Harper). There was also a Harriet Cranchford who stood in for Ms. Palsgraf when necessary.
- Bazoo—a part of the body frequently injured by defective products
- Gazonka Pin—the defective part of a machine often causing injuries to the bazoo

Stan won our Goldman Prize for Excellence in Teaching twice. He taught Remedies, Torts, and Civil Procedure. Quoting one of my classmates, Dale Vitale, “Professor Harper was a delightful blend of theorist and pragmatist who taught us the law, but also tried to get us to think about the application of it. I was drawn to his unpretentious brilliance, as I took every class he taught.” Dale had lots of company in those classes. Professor Harper was always a student favorite.

Another endearing quality of Stan’s was that he believed in love. Ruth was his wife of forty-plus years, and no tribute would be complete

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without mentioning her. In his classes, there were "Ruth Questions." Not long after Stan's death, I received a great story from Shari Winget O'Neill (Class of 1989) about how she became the girl who asked the Ruth question. It seems Professor Harper was teaching a civil procedure case involving the movie *Cleopatra*, and its stars Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton were sued because the movie was such a flop. Harper went on to cover the procedure point, but Shari wanted to know, and asked, "What happened? Who won the law suit?" Quoting Shari: "'How did it end?' he said in amazement. 'How did it end? Now that, my dear students, is what I like to call 'A Ruth Question.' My wife, Ruth, would ask that kind of question.'"

When Stan retired from teaching, the law school newspaper, *The Restatement*, printed a story about Ruth, who was quoted as saying, "You can't believe a word he says about me! . . . I want everyone to know I'm not quite as dumb as he says I am—even if I do ask 'Ruth Questions!'"

After Ruth died, Stan was alone for awhile, and then married Rosemary Davis, long the women's and society editor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. After Rosemary's death he married a third time. I met Marja Barrett last December, and of course Stan took great delight in introducing me to his third wife. He said that women just seemed to want to be married to him, and he was happy to go along with the idea.

He really believed in love, and as evidence I offer Ruth, Rosemary, Marja, and his favorite Shakespeare sonnet, No. 116:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
Oh no! It is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken. . . .

I think Stan, the romantic, would be so happy to know that Shari married one of her classmates, who first noticed her in class because she asked "the Ruth Question."

Finally, Stan was a great guy. When he retired from the law school in 1987, we paid tribute to him, as we often do when long-time teachers depart the classroom, with a "last class." Not much gets taught in the last class, as we surprise the unsuspecting retiree with visits from former students and a few well-selected parting gifts. To start Stan's last class, some students had a six pack of chilled Hudepohl beer and a sack of White Castles waiting for him. I had coaxed Mark Dinkelacker of our library staff to recruit a few other musicians, and they serenaded him with his favorite song, that great Duke Ellington tune "Take the A

Train.” We needed someone to present gifts, and Cris Collinsworth of Bengals and NFL fame did the honors. Stan and Ruth received swimwear—obviously brief swimwear—the better to enjoy sunny climes in retirement.

Stan had good friends and he was a good friend. One of his good friends was Jack Grosse who taught for many years at Northern Kentucky University’s Salmon P. Chase College of Law. Stan also taught at Chase for awhile, and then when UC’s Dean Roscoe Barrow suggested a merger between Chase and UC, Stan came over to Ohio to help ease the transition. He stayed on and on at UC, and was often heard to comment that he “was the only one who ever merged.” When Stan retired, Jack wrote a tribute, called “A Soliloquy of Harperisms,” which appeared in our alumni magazine. Here is an excerpt:

I am Stanley Ellis Harper, Jr., 35681326 although I use the professional name Harold Cranchford. I’m from Vinton County where man and beast live alike. . . . Some of my favorite things not to do are play bridge (oh all right if you need a fourth), play golf (well maybe nine holes at Indian Valley), . . . and eat in fancy restaurant (of course I’ll go to the 307). . . . Well I’m going to keep busy and travel to oomph stumph. Actually, I’ll have no problems in retirement, I am 65 years old and I can cope.

Last time I saw Stan he was tanned, crinkled around the eyes, and looking for a place to smoke. He said, “Hello, whatever-your-name-is,” which is what he always called me, and asked how things were going at the law school. Stan was associate dean immediately preceding me, and he gave me a lot of good advice on how to deal with students and faculty. I am not divulging any secrets here, but I will say he was a good mentor, mostly because he had a knack for calming me down. As Sam Wilson, a colleague from the faculty and a former dean of the College said, “He is one of those rare individuals who grows stronger and whose jokes get funnier as the particular academic crisis deepens. His perspective helps you to realize that whatever tempest is currently roiling the Faculty teacup is really not Armageddon. I shall miss him very much.”

And so shall we all. Good-bye, my old friend.