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## Roark Reed: A tribute

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## ROARK REED: A TRIBUTE

*Alexis Gabay\**

ONE of the primary reasons I selected SMU was its clinic program. Such programs were rare in the early 1980s and SMU offered three at the time. Law schools without actual experience made as much sense to me as learning to play chess without the opportunity to actually touch the pieces.

I participated in the criminal clinic for a full year because of Roark Reed, who headed that clinic in the fall of 1984. Although I initially had no interest in criminal law, it seemed to offer the most client contact and courtroom experience. Indeed, by the time I graduated in 1985, I had supervised other students in the clinic, tried three jury cases, appeared in countless arraignments and pleadings, and successfully negotiated sentences with the district attorney. Not only did my year in criminal clinic look great on my resume, it also enabled me to confidently try cases, argue motions, and interview witnesses immediately upon graduation.

Roark clearly loved his role as a mentor. He treated us as colleagues as we transitioned from students to actual practicing lawyers downtown. He was the calm to our in-court mentor Mike McCollum's abundant energy. He was patient and encouraging—and also very funny. His concern was not only for our clients, but also for our own safety and advancement.

He showed us that a successful career did not have to mean Big Law Firm but that it had to do with real people. It was there that I learned to communicate with clients, explaining what was happening to them in court to alleviate their fear. In short, the clinic taught me to be a counselor and gave me skills that I have used ever since. I am forever grateful to Professor Reed for his guidance, compassion, and friendship.

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\* J.D. 1985, Southern Methodist University School of Law; B.S. 1980, Arizona State University.

