

2019

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Recommended Citation

Polly Rea O'Toole, *Bill Bridge: Professor, Mentor, Friend*, 72 SMU L. REV. 17 (2019)

<https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol72/iss1/7>

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BILL BRIDGE: PROFESSOR, MENTOR, FRIEND

*Polly Rea O'Toole**

THERE are better people to extol Professor Bridge's talents as a law professor. While he did indeed teach me Criminal Law, Evidence, and Ethics in the early '90s, his impact on my life extends much further than the classroom. He was a formative force in my career, an ever-present encouragement and sounding board. The definition of a mentor.

I will say that as a teacher, Bill is brilliant, observant, and provocative. Consequently, his teaching style encourages independent thought and debate. More than one law student has bemoaned the fact that he refuses to spoon-feed material in snippets of contextualized legal jargon that is easily regurgitated on an exam. He prefers a deeper dive. He adores good debate, and intense analysis, in and out of the classroom. No class is ever boring, and no dinner party ever dull, when he is present.

While Bill remains my mentor and teacher, he has also been a devoted friend for more than twenty-five years. I am quite put out with him at the moment, however, as I will explain. Bill and I became friends in the summer of 1992 when he took a group of us law students to study at Oxford. As I got to know the person behind the professor that summer, he turned out to be one of the finest people I have ever known. As I do, many of Bill's former students count him as a close, personal friend and mentor. He took many of us under his wing and nurtured our fledgling careers with his sound advice and encouragement.

If you are lucky enough to be counted among his hundreds of friends, you know that above all else, Bill Bridge is generous. I am not referring to the kind of generous friend who remembers your birthday or pays for dinner, although he has done both. Bill is generous with his time. When it comes to the people and the causes he cares about, Bill shows up and brings reinforcements. Evidence is defined as “[t]he available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid.”¹ The unequivocal evidence of Bill's generosity is an intensely loyal and devoted cadre of friends and colleagues who showed up to celebrate him by the hundreds in the year following the announcement of his re-

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1. Oxford University Press, *Evidence*, OXFORD DICTIONARIES, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/evidence> [<http://perma.cc/8QZG-9BDA>] (last visited Feb. 9, 2019).

tirement. It was a solid year of well-deserved parties, dinners, and tributes.

Bill is now enjoying a beautiful life as a retired law professor in Portland, Oregon—a life I told him he would hate. And this is why I am currently put out with him. During the long year of goodbye, I told him he was making a huge mistake in leaving the amazing life he had built in Dallas and moving to godforsaken Portland. Who lives in Portland? No one. I pelted him with predictions of his misery. I told him that Portland averages only 144 days of sunshine per year and that new species of fungus and mold (unique to Portland) were being discovered daily. He moved anyway. Not surprisingly, the evidence will clearly establish that Bill is happy in Portland and Portland is happy to have Bill. I miss him, and I am still bitter about the whole situation.