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## Roy Ryden Anderson: A Tribute to an SMU Legend

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## ROY RYDEN ANDERSON: A TRIBUTE TO AN SMU LEGEND

*C. Paul Rogers III\**

THE SMU Dedman School of Law faculty is down a legend after Roy Ryden Anderson's retirement last spring. For more than a half a century, Roy has graced Storey Hall, first as a student, then as an assistant and associate dean, and finally and most importantly, as a celebrated faculty member at his alma mater for almost fifty years.

It may be that legends beget legends. I'm not sure that is always true, but it is in Roy's case. Charley Galvin, certainly a legendary figure in legal education generally and as SMU's law dean for fifteen years, saw something special in Roy as a law student and upon Roy's graduation hired him as Executive Director of our Criminal Justice Program. Roy quickly became an assistant dean and soon thereafter joined the teaching faculty.

I wasn't around in those days, but I believe it reasonable to say that Roy was literally and figuratively the law school's fair-haired boy. After not so many years, off he went to Yale for an LL.M., a not uncommon practice for young law school faculty in those days. Luckily for us, he returned to SMU and stayed the course here, teaching generations of our graduates to their great benefit.

Roy and I go way back, even further than either of us realized at first. We have been colleagues for forty years at SMU, but soon after my arrival in 1980 as the new kid on the block, we discovered that we had overlapped at the same high school, Permian High in Odessa, Texas (of *Friday Night Lights* fame), although we weren't in the same class and didn't know each other. Roy and I, however, have much more in common than West Texas because we've both taught Contracts for years, and I dabbled in the Sale of Goods Transactions course years ago, one of Roy's staples. In addition, we also share a love of baseball, baseball memorabilia, books, and SMU athletics, so our frequent conversations have ranged from teaching methodology to the Brooklyn Dodgers of the 1950s, with everything in between.

One of Roy's many fine qualities is his enthusiasm once he commits to a project or activity, whether it be bass fishing or treatise writing. Although Roy served as an associate dean early in his career, he resisted returning to administration until the early 2000s, when the then law

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school dean wore him down and convinced him to serve as Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Once committed, Roy was all in and served in that role for six years, which is about two lifetimes for that thankless post.

Earlier, when we were considerably younger, some faculty and students decided that the law school should have an entry in the Dallas Bar Association's lawyer softball league. We called ourselves the Cavalry, and Roy enthusiastically took the lead as player-manager, dealt with all of the scheduling and administrative tasks, recruited, and ensured that we fielded a competitive squad. Of course, our diamond adventure was not without hiccups. We ordered jerseys for our initial season, and when they arrived and we excitedly put them on, someone noticed that the lovely script inscription on the front read "The Calvary." The joke was indeed on us; we resisted joining a church league and wore them proudly anyway.

But Roy has primarily been a teacher of the first order and a scholar of national reputation. He is beloved by generations of our law graduates not because he was easy and gave good grades but because he was demanding and required his students to learn to think on their feet. I've often thought that a lawyer's learning curve is steepest in the first year in law school and first year out of law school. Roy, like me, views Contracts as a quintessential legal process course and the first year of law school as the key time for law students to learn how "to think like a lawyer," to use the common idiom for the development of legal reasoning skills. More than once Roy led the charge to fend off challenges from within that sought to convert Contracts to a one-semester four-hour course as part of first-year curriculum reform.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the walls of SMU, Roy carved out a national reputation as a commercial law scholar. His two-volume *Damages Under the Uniform Commercial Code*<sup>2</sup> is the standard reference work on the subject. When Roy talks remedies, people listen. He has served in various roles with the American Law Institute and the American Bar Association, addressing the revision of Article 2 of the UCC, as befits one of his stature. On the state level, Roy took the lead as the principal drafter for State Bar of Texas's ad hoc legislative drafting committees for revisions of Articles 1, 2, and 2A of the UCC.

Without in any way diminishing Roy's impressive professional accomplishments, it is fair to say that the classroom was Roy's passion and his home away from home. His students knew that he was invested in their

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1. There are, of course, many valid pedagogical goals and courses competing for the first-year curriculum when the students are new to and fully immersed in the study of law. Most Contracts professors—or at least old ones like Roy and me—prefer Contracts as a two-semester course, which allows us the luxury of focusing on legal process and developing legal reasoning skills without having to worry too much about course coverage in the first semester.

2. ROY RYDEN ANDERSON, *DAMAGES UNDER THE UNIFORM COMMERCIAL CODE* (2020–2021 ed. 2020).

education and that he genuinely liked them. His homespun humor (“It’s not rocket science,” to quote one of his favorite sayings) resonated with students of all backgrounds. He managed to create a positive learning environment while being demanding and understanding of student shortcomings, all in one fell swoop. That’s a trick only master teachers can accomplish.

Thus, although Roy’s retirement means the law school is down a legend, his impact on the school and the profession won’t soon be forgotten, as his legions of former students will attest. Roy and his wife Barbara—who Roy will tell you is by far the smartest lawyer in their household—love to travel, and he has certainly earned that right. We wish them Godspeed and many years of watching beautiful sunsets from wherever they choose to be.

