



2006

Forever a Mentor: A Student's Perspective on Dean Frankino

Jaret N. Gronczewski

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.villanova.edu/vlr>



Part of the [Legal Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jaret N. Gronczewski, *Forever a Mentor: A Student's Perspective on Dean Frankino*, 51 Vill. L. Rev. 23 (2006).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.villanova.edu/vlr/vol51/iss1/9>

This Tribute is brought to you for free and open access by Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Villanova Law Review by an authorized editor of Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law Digital Repository.

FOREVER A MENTOR:
A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE ON DEAN FRANKINO

I felt initiated. Initiated into the club of law students who crumble badly under the pressure of their first bout with the Socratic Method. My intellectual defeat was at the hands of Dean Frankino during the third Contracts class of the first year. While trying to navigate through the details of the precise measuring date to use for the market price of wheat in a breach of contract case, I hit a terrible impasse. I not only did not know the answer to Dean Frankino's question, I did not even understand what he asked me! Sensing my peril and resulting anxiety, he ever-so-kindly nudged my thinking into the right direction until I finally stumbled upon the answer he was looking for—saving me from complete embarrassment in front of my new classmates. From that moment on, I was forever endeared to the man.

That was the type of person the Dean was. Behind the institutionally designed coldness of the Socratic Method was a warm, gentle and whole-hearted man. I spent that first semester in awe of him and his breadth of knowledge. He seemed to know everything about anything that went on in the world, and there was nothing I enjoyed more than one of his quick vignettes that he would give us, detailing the context in which a case arose. Whether telling us about the precarious nature of the international cotton business during the American Civil War before studying the famous *Peerless* case or explaining the necessary background of the Industrial Revolution in order to fully understand the *Hadley* doctrine, Dean Frankino always provided us with the correct perspective lens through which to view a case.

He also provided us with the correct perspective lens through which to view our job as law students on the whole. To this day, I hold dearly the advice he gave us on the first day of school. He told us that our mission for these three years was to act as a sponge and retain as much knowledge as possible. "Because once you get out of here, it is not just your reputation on the line, but your client's well-being also." I will never forget those words of infinite wisdom.

He loved the beauty of legal reasoning at its finest, and he tried to transfer this appreciation to his legal novice students. Analogical reasoning, he would tell us in his deep voice, was the skill that we were attending law school to learn. While warning us of the dissonance that we would feel at the precipice of this journey, you could see the joy on his face when he would describe the inevitable "I got it" moment that all first-year students achieve at some point. At that time, however, many of us doubted if we were ever going to find that moment.

Dean Frankino was the epitome of what I felt a law school professor would be: highly intelligent, formal and commanding respect. He was a

venerable throw-back to a law school atmosphere of the past. In many ways, that made my first year experience so great, because by taking his class, I truly felt that I was attaining the same unique experience that generations of law students before me received. For that, I will always be indebted to the late Dean Frankino. And so looking back fondly to those wide-eyed times of two years ago, I can now say that the man who filled my mind in my first year has filled my heart in my last year.

Jaret N. Gronczewski