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# Memorial Tribute for Peter N. Kutulakis, Esquire

Mark D. Bradshaw\*

Peter was an unusual man, generous in spirit, warm, unselfish, and genuinely concerned about those around him. He had a great sense of humor and a truly refined appreciation of irony.

I met him shortly after arriving in Carlisle in 1989, and our friendship grew as we encountered each other in various contexts. I was fortunate enough to serve as his research assistant, had him as a classroom instructor, benefitted from his encouragement as a client counseling competition coach, and, once these more “artificial” roles passed, grew to know him as a friend and confidant.

It is no exaggeration to say that Peter’s life was a work of art. He deliberately and consciously wove a rich tapestry of family, friends, interests, hobbies (and, naturally, work) into a life befitting the modern day renaissance man that he was. A non-exclusive list of Peter’s interests would include food, wine, music, singing, literature, art, theater, movies, and horsemanship. With such diverse personal interests, it is a wonder that he had time for his work, but he certainly did. Peter was the kind of man who made time for the things that were important.

He took his role as a counselor to students very seriously, and was fanatical about confidentiality. Although some might find listening to law students’ gripes tedious or repetitive, Peter did not. His concerns about confidentiality prevented him from discussing with others the specifics of these sessions with students; however, as his research assistant, I spent considerable time in his office, and I had the opportunity to observe first-hand the willingness he had to meet with any student, at any time, without notice, to discuss issues of concern to the student (however weighty).

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It seemed almost as if Peter found others' willingness to confide in him liberating. And confide they did; only at his memorial service did it become apparent to me the sheer number of alumni, faculty, and professional colleagues who routinely turned to Peter for advice and counsel (or merely for a receptive "ear" and sounding board).

Among the most remarkable things about Peter was his non-judgmental response to nearly any disclosure. This was not because Peter was merely a "sponge" with no real opinions of his own—far from it. It was merely that Peter practiced what he preached to his students: that openness and acceptance are the key to earning others' trust and that a secure feeling that encourages others to disclose everything without fear of censure or critique sets the stage for an attorney's ability to offer a client the best informed professional advice.

Peter not only practiced these skills, but attempted to spread them throughout the profession by teaching "active listening" and other empathic techniques both in his class and by example. He had an uncanny ability, both with me and with others, to sense the "play behind the play." I can't remember the number of times he would respond to a soliloquy of mine by saying something akin to the following: "Okay, wait a minute amigo—what's really going on here . . . what else haven't you told me?" Peter had such a disarming manner and palpable desire to help that one could not keep from being swept up in the same, confess the one-sidedness of the original "version" of the problem, and ultimately bring oneself to a more mature understanding.

Peter required those around him to have reasoned, well thought-out positions. Among his gifts was the ability to ever so gently point out that a position was, shall we say, less than fully thought out. Unlike so many of us who are trained in advocacy, Peter's approach was not to confront—but rather to delicately prompt an advocate to reconsider the strength of his or her position. In that regard, Peter's skill lay in gently planting seeds of discomfort in those who were previously overly confident in their positions.

In many ways, Peter was the "conscience" of the law school. Although he created the law school's career planning and placement office, he never forgot (and would not let his students forget) that the law is fundamentally about *people* not jobs, money, and status.

Despite his many accomplishments in a field filled with egos, Peter seemingly never felt the need to stroke his own at another's expense. While he was extraordinarily well-read and cultured, I never saw him preempt someone else's exposition on any topic in order to demonstrate his own superior mastery of the particular subject matter. In an age where many talk but few listen, Peter was more interested in gleaning another's insights than in demonstrating that his were more refined, subtle, or sophisticated. (Although, if his companions were also interested in listening as well as speaking, they would frequently find out that Peter's were!).

It is impossible to try to sum up Peter's life in a few scant pages. Suffice it to say that he was a remarkable and unique man whom I was privileged to know and from whom I learned much. Dean Kutulakis taught his students about life while pretending to teach interviewing and counseling.

Upon reflection, I can only wonder about the imbalance in our friendship. I certainly feel that I got the best of the bargain, although Peter would not have heard of it. His friendships with students and others were what kept him vibrant. Certainly, the law school will be a lesser place as a result of his absence. He is, and will remain, sorely missed.

