

Grant Gilmore as a Friend

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Everybody knows that Grant Gilmore is one of a handful of the best law teachers in America, and that his published work in law stands in the first rank not only of our times but of all time. I think my tribute, to add anything, must be personal.

I cannot recall my first meeting with Grant. We both entered the Sterling Law Buildings in the autumn of 1940, members together of the freshman class. In those early weeks, I somehow became conscious of the presence in that class of a man not only of the sharpest acumen for law itself, but also of a broad and deeply informed humanistic, classical bent, with the gift somehow of bringing these things together and making them part of the same intellectual and personal universe. This meant a great deal to me in those days, because, to say the least, I entered the study of law with great misgivings, in no way aware of its character as an art, or of its necessary, rather than merely accidental and sporadic, connection with all that people do and suffer, and with all the keenest and best thought on the human condition. Grant and I have gone different paths in law, and of course our mature legal philosophies are far from identical. But I think it not too much to say that my law school friendship with Grant was of critical importance in making me see that there could be, in law, a road I could take, and in guiding my first steps toward that road. It is no common good luck to take one's first lessons in law in close community with a dear friend (for he was very soon that) who is a born genius in teaching.

Of course our friendship soon overflowed the bounds of law study, however broadly seen, and I remember him as a wise counselor in hours of trouble, as a companion in pleasantness, all through my student days.

After the War, and at about the time of my starting as a law teacher at Columbia, I noted, with a feeling of inevitable rightness, that Grant had come onto the faculty at Yale. During these years we were able actively to maintain our friendship, partly because of his work with Karl Llewellyn (then at Columbia) on the Uniform Commercial Code, and partly because, after all, New Haven is not very far from New York. When I came back home to Yale, in 1956, I was very sure that Grant had played a leading part in my being asked, and when Barbara

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and I arrived we found waiting for us, in Grant and Helen, a friendship that linked and bridged all the years, and made it a homecoming indeed—even, in a sense, for Barbara.

Then, in 1957, there was “Gilmore and Black on Admiralty”¹—a first book for both of us, his first in commercial law, and—doubtless for the good of the business world—my last. I would be guilty of misleading the young by inexcusable concealment if I let it be thought that collaboration, particularly for very close friends, does not have its problems. But when the *Yale Law Journal* (in 1975, I believe) made the two of us—or better, the four of us—its jointly honored guests at a banquet marking the appearance of our second edition, the *Journal* editors—perhaps without entire awareness of what they were doing, but with an unforgettably generous spirit that could be said at the very least to signal an openness to any good significance—were in truth conducting with us a ritual celebrating a friendship that had passed through all the weathers of thirty-five years. Love endureth.

Grant, there is nothing I could add to, and nothing I would subtract from, the estimate the world has of you, as thinker and teacher. The only thing special to me that I can say is that I am grateful, to you and to Whoever arranges these things, for our friendship.

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