

Symposium on The Civil Rights of Public School Students

For Jack, Man of the Book

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FOR JACK, MAN OF THE BOOK

Laura G. Dooley*

It seems a little strange to be composing this tribute to my great friend and mentor Jack Hiller on a fancy macbook computer. Jack famously eschewed computers in favor of the hunt-and-peck system on an old typewriter. He could churn out letters (and God help you if you were on the receiving end of one in which a grievance was outlined in meticulous and lawyerly detail), articles, and class notes with speed and acuity. And what a wonderful writer Jack was. Some of his talent with the written word was no doubt innate, but it was also honed throughout his lifetime by his love of books. To coopt a phrase used to describe those whose religious beliefs and practices are grounded in a written text—that is, “people of the book,”—it seems to me that perhaps the best way to describe Jack is as a “man of the book.” As a reader, as a writer, and as an editor, Jack spent his life in the pursuit of academic excellence as manifested in the written word.

I am no doubt not the only colleague of Jack’s to have a “Hiller shelf” in my office—a shelf devoted exclusively to the books that Jack gave or lent me. Jack was first of all, and perhaps above all, a voracious and broad-minded reader. He read everything, from mysteries to humor to books about food and cooking, in addition to his professional mastery of hordes of legal texts. And his brain was a virtual card catalog. Mention to Jack that you have an interest in feminism and that your daughter is flirting with vegetarianism and voila! Next thing you know there’s a book on your desk entitled *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. And as with everything else, Jack gave generously of both his personal encyclopedic knowledge and his library.

As a writer, Jack used his enormous gift to enrich the legal literature but did not confine his output to mere reportage or arcane legal analysis (though his sharp mind was certainly at the ready constantly to do whatever analytical work needed to be done). And Jack had a wit that shone through even in his scholarly writing—how can you not be intrigued by a title like that of an article Jack coauthored late in his career: “Comparative Legal Semiotics and the Divided Brain: Are We Producing Half-Brained Lawyers?”

Even reading his classnotes was a pleasure. When I volunteered to teach a course in Legal Process, a new area for me, Jack with his usual graciousness offered me his notes painstakingly kept over many years of teaching that legendary course pioneered by Henry Hart and Albert Sacks to discover a third path in the law beyond legal positivism and

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legal realism. I learned more from reading those notes than from the textbook itself.

A consummate teacher, Jack also relished editing other writers' work, and there was much to be learned from his editorial suggestions. Many generations of Valparaiso law students benefited from the formidable red pen Jack wielded on seminar papers and law review notes. And his formal role as the founding editor of the *Journal of Third World Legal Studies* brought serious scholarly attention to post-colonial issues in the legal literature.

As a "man of the book," Jack leaves us with a textual legacy that will continue to influence us in ways big and small. His students will carry on their legal careers with a deeper understanding of law and language that permeates every aspect of their practices. His colleagues who enjoyed his mentorship and friendship will strive to follow his example in academic excellence. And I will smile and say a prayer of appreciation every time I look at the Hiller shelf in my office. Thanks, Jack.