

Summer 2019: Tribute to Valparaiso University Law School (1879-2019)

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In Memoriam:

DAVID A. MYERS (1950-2019)



Dave was born on Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois, on November 11, 1951, to Robert and Jane (Gustafson) Myers. Survivors include his siblings Steve (Kathy) Myers of Clinton, Illinois, and Jan (Greg) Manning of Pleasanton, California; children Jon (Rhys) Myers of Holland, Michigan, and Kate (Nick) Myers-Coffman of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and grandchildren Jack and Olivia. Dave was preceded in death by his parents, Robert E. and Jane Ruth Myers, and his wife, Inma Minoves-Myers.

Dave and Inma Myers settled in Valparaiso, Indiana, in 1980, barely three hours from Dave's hometown of Clinton, Illinois. Despite living most of his life within a few hundred miles, his breadth of experience was far more expansive. Maybe it was because the woman who chose to walk beside him wasn't local, hailing from Spain via Uruguay. Maybe it was the early cynicism in him that allowed questions to easily take root—it's been said he was a curmudgeon beyond his years. Or maybe his wanderlust simply carried his ideas too fast and too far for his feet to catch up. Whatever the reason, and despite carrying a vein of stubbornness that

could be mined his whole life, this life-long learner found few boxes he wouldn't grow out of. His love for the Midwest grew in the midst of this, taking images and ideologies from the noblest of places like kids keep stones from their most interesting travels. When Inma expressed her sadness for not being able to see the Pyrenees, he assured her that at some point she'd grow to love the endless expanse of horizon that Middle America offers (spoiler: she did). Dave's love of noble ideas caused him to invest and exchange quotes from Abraham Lincoln and Mark Twain, seeing the value of words and their power to create intellectual infrastructure in and between people. While later editions of his dust jacket would read "inspired by Midwest America," there is no denying that the first edition was printed straight out of the Land of Lincoln.

In addition to his wife and family, Dave was a lover of all things music, a love that was sparked in his youth. Dave was a disc jockey for WHOW radio station in Clinton, Illinois, and was the drummer of The Mystics, a 1950s cover band, with his brother and childhood friends. Dave often shared memories of live shows he went to with incredible detail, a level of attention that manifested itself into a role many knew him to play—a serious audiophile. Dave created unique systems in his house to capture nuanced soundscapes for a number of experiences, the most notable being a meticulously calibrated system for music listening in which you could sit in his "sweet spot" and hear details of songs you might not have even known existed. He lived for sharing this sweet spot with others, watching you close your eyes to lose yourself in a sea of sound. You'd open your eyes and he'd be grinning from ear to ear, glad to have been able to give you such a gift. Everyone who experienced Dave's "sweet spot" forever heard the world a little differently, and Dave would silently rejoice in that gift of change.

Jonathan Myers and Kate Myers-Coffman

Professor Myers started teaching Property and related courses in 1980. A year earlier, he had become a founding member of the American Agricultural Law Association. He served as president of that organization from 1985-86, and he was given the association's Distinguished Service Award in 1995. He continued to do research on the meaning and significance of Jeffersonian Agrarianism.

In 1985, he added a new dimension to his scholarly work by coauthoring a casebook on Entertainment Law and by teaching courses in Entertainment Law and Media Law. He focused on issues of defamation and privacy law, with a particular interest in the problem of cyberbullying on the internet.

Professor Myers received the Charles Gromley Distinguished Teaching Award in 1996. He was named the Michael and Dianne Swygert Teaching Fellow from 2008–2010. He was also an advisor to the Latino Law Students' Association.

Valparaiso University Law School

THE MEASURE OF A LIFE¹

Dave Myers was a musician-philosopher, who loved the rhythms of life and looked at the beauty of the world with wonder even as he faced the greatest challenges of his illness. I much admired how he could tumble ideas through his brain and communicate those ideas in plain, Midwestern, measured words. And these ingredients made him a great teacher: he was thoughtful of both his material and of his students. Even as he began considering retirement, he introduced an innovative class—Agrarianism, Farming, and Sustainability—to adapt a field of law he loved in order to pass that passion on to a younger generation. He wasn't flashy, but he cared about the law, about the law school, and about his students. Not for him the star turn à la Ginger Baker but rather of the underrated Ringo Starr. People underestimated him at their peril.

But Dave also had his Joliet Jake goofy side. He had the best chuckling laugh when he was tickled about something. The last time we texted, he told me he was "stoked" about giving his grandson a drum kit. In retrospect, I think he was my "high school" buddy. We both had similar Midwestern upbringings and Midwestern educations. That was enough in common to talk about anything in our lives, so we talked about good times and bad, youthful enthusiasms, the death of his parents and my father, and his undying love for Inma, his children, and his grandchildren. We also talked Big Ten sports. Annually, we would watch a University of Illinois vs. Purdue basketball game, always a good time when we ate stuff he shouldn't have been eating. But he loved pork BBQ! The last game we watched was the 2018 UI vs. Purdue football game. So this year, I have been watching 2019 UI football games in his memory, and I will watch their bowl game on December 30, 2019. Maybe I will eat pork BBQ.

Now his "mission from God" is over. He was my friend, I loved him, and I miss him.

Susan P. Stuart

¹ "The measure of a life is not its duration, but its donation." Peter Marshall

Professor David Myers was widely regarded as one of the most energetic and engaged professors at Valparaiso School of Law. His love of law and passion for his students was inspirational and motivating in so many ways. You would often hear his hearty laugh in the halls of the law school as he shared his many life experiences and life lessons with those around us. He started almost every class with a joke or a story, and no class was ever just a lecture but, instead, a dialogue between a professor and his students. He challenged norms by engaging in debates that sustained demanding intellectual prowess from his students and others around him. He was warm, generous, empathetic, a loving father, a thoughtful scholar and dedicated teacher. Professor Myers often acted as a critical support system, mentor, and guide for students as they navigated through their first year of law school. As the years passed, you would often see those same students back in his office laughing and sharing their first-year horror stories and thanking him for his unwavering support. While there may have been sometimes decades of years between him and his students, he had this unique knack for connecting with everyone and relating to them in words and stories their generation could appreciate. He was dedicated to creating opportunities for students and graduates to explore and study the law while also encouraging students and graduates to push their boundaries to realize greater potential.

There are many more amazing qualities I could use to describe Professor Myers, but I most remember him for his steady guidance, advice, sense of humor, and optimism. Whether it was navigating through an academic challenge or a personal obstacle, Professor Myers always listened, while gently nodding his head, and then would say, "You will persevere, now let's get to work on how to make that happen." To this day, when I find myself feeling like the challenges ahead of me are insurmountable, I often hear his voice telling me to "forge ahead and the change you need will come." He gave to others more than he was ever willing to take from anyone, and he did so daily with such grace. The lessons he shared with me have forever marked my life in a most positive and impactful way. While he may not be with us today, his resilience, optimism and laugh will live on in his students for years to come. I know I speak for many when I say, Thank you Professor Myers for sharing your passion for learning and life with each of us, you are missed deeply.

Samantha Ahuja

Like many former VU law students, I was introduced to principles of property law by Dave Myers. From that experience alone, I can tell you that Professor Myers had a sharp legal mind, was adept at explaining

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difficult concepts so that we terrified 1Ls could understand them, and you could tell that he truly cared about the subject he was teaching and his students. But I came to learn after law school, that Dave was far more than a great teacher and mentor to generations of law students, he was an exceptional human being, humanitarian, social justice advocate, and friend. No doubt the world is a better place because Dave Myers was in it.

Kim Ferraro