

## **KAREN KRAMER'S REMARKS**

I first met Robert six months or so after he joined Covington where I was a senior associate in the real estate group. Like many junior associates, he had been casting about looking for a comfortable home in the large law firm world. His associate advisor, a lawyer I knew well, had suggested he talk to me about the real estate practice. So, one day he stopped by my office to introduce himself. We had a lengthy discussion about the group and the practice and I suggested he come to one of the group's weekly lunches.

"Well . . .," he said cautiously, "let me think about it."

Over the next few months, Robert and I got to know each other better and we had more conversations about the firm's real estate practice group. By this point I had figured out that behind the initial serious demeanor lay a quick wit and warm smile, and that he was someone I wanted to get to know better and with whom I would enjoy working. So, each time we discussed the real estate practice, I would suggest that he come to the weekly lunch to meet the other lawyers in the group, and each time he would hesitate and say he would consider it.

Finally, one day Robert called me. "Okay," he said very seriously, "I'll come to the real estate lunch."

Robert had done as much research as possible, and was only going to go to the real estate lunch if he was prepared to take on real estate group assignments. He was not someone who would be able to say no to those assignments, so he simply could not come to a real estate lunch until he was committed to taking on this responsibility full force.

And this was characteristic of how Robert often approached new opportunities in the time I knew him – he would carefully evaluate them before accepting the responsibility, because he wanted to make sure that once he took on something he could give it his full attention. Which is not to say that he shied away from responsibility – in fact, quite the opposite – he never hesitated to jump in where needed – whether staying up all night to help review 500 leases on a due diligence project, or to devote substantial time to an unglamorous pro bono matter worth little in terms of dollars and cents but personally important to the client – and once he took it on, he owned it.

Robert's work was very personal to him – he was involved with and cared about his clients, and doing well by them was a matter of both personal and professional pride. Because of that, he made an impact on the people he worked with. So I was not surprised that a client with whom we had both worked and with whom I had not spoken in four years was one of the first people I heard from Thursday morning.

I was pleased to have recruited Robert to join the Covington real estate group where I know he thrived, and my only disappointment in his move to RFA was that it meant I had not succeeded in my four year campaign to recruit him to the small affordable housing firm where I currently practice.

Of course, Robert was much more to me than a committed lawyer. He was also an exceptional friend. No matter what was going on in his life, he always made the extra effort to make time for his friends and to know what was going on in their lives. He was someone with whom I not only made lunch plans to catch up every few months, but even usually actually had lunch.

I remember having lunch with Robert in March of 2002, shortly after he had met Kathy. He told me that he was planning a trip to China with his parents for the fall, more than six months in the future. And that Kathy was going to go, too. I asked if he was sure it was a good idea to plan such an intense trip so early in the relationship. About this there was no hesitation. He simply said, "Yes, I'm sure."

To Kathy and Robert's family, we all join you in grieving the loss of an exceptional individual who will be deeply missed.

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Hessell & Aluise