

I first met Robert when we were students at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Although we struggled through the same first-year section together, I really did not have an opportunity to get to understand his remarkable mind until second year when we both took Federal Courts from Professor Goodman. The students affectionately nicknamed Professor Goodman “Big Top Frank.” I think this was because his classes were run like a circus. Federal Courts is an arcane course, and Professor Goodman’s lectures are famously opaque.

I remember one day when Robert and I were studying together and discussing various abstention doctrines. Abstention is a convoluted subset of the arcane subject of Federal Courts. I felt pretty good, like I understood the different doctrines — Younger, Pullman, Colorado River, etc.

But Robert, in his typically modest way, said “I don’t understand this.” He then went on to explain to me all the subtle nuances of abstention that confused him. He maintained this state of confusion throughout the semester. (I think this was partly Professor Goodman’s goal.)

Robert, of course, aced the class. Today, I realize that it was his sense of humility and ability to recognize his own confusion that allowed him to delve into the subject and understand it in a way that few could.

Robert could see the subtle internal contradictions in the law and recognize that there was actually no right answer. And this was his strength, because it is in arguing within these gaps and inconsistencies where brilliant lawyers make their mark.

I would also like to say something about Robert as a friend. I have never known a person more generous with his time and friendship than Robert. As we heard from the eulogy, Robert kept himself very busy, but this never prevented him from finding time for his friends.

I am embarrassed to say that he called me more than I called him to set up lunch or a dinner with our wives Kathy and Katrina. In the past few days I have seen and spoken with many long-lost friends. Robert, of course, kept up with all of them and he would give me periodic updates on their latest exploits.

His generosity of time and the strength of his friendship humble me. As much as his loss hurts, he taught me about friendship and has made me a better person.

Paul Stone, Classmate
University of Pennsylvania Law School, ‘99