

Tribute to J. Patrick Wiseman

Sylvia Cedillo

The following tribute was delivered by Sylvia Cedillo, staff attorney at the Texas Civil Rights Project and University of Texas Law alumna (Class of 1995). J. Patrick Wiseman was a friend, mentor, and godfather to her daughter. Patrick Wiseman was instrumental in the organization of the Texas Forum on Civil Liberties & Civil Rights at the University of Texas School of Law. This tribute was delivered at the Texas Forum's Annual Spring Banquet held in Austin, Texas on April 4, 1998.

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I have been asked to briefly speak about Patrick's contributions to the *Texas Forum*.

After discussions with several of his colleagues and using my own recollection, I think it's safe to say that the *Texas Forum* would not exist but for Patrick's tenacious efforts, political savvy, and generous wallet. . .and his ability to get others to fork over their money.

According to Larry Sauer, it seems that Patrick had talked for years with his Individual Rights and Responsibilities Section mates about starting a journal. He had always promised he would get a newsletter or journal going.

Patrick wanted to see something different because there are so many student law journals that have a particular perspective that would not accept the kind of information one finds in the *Texas Forum*. He was looking for something that had a little more freedom; something that wasn't necessarily written within the traditional Law Review format.

He wanted a publication that allowed the editors to bring in a diversity of perspectives. I remember that early on, the students had death row inmate, Gary Graham, write for the *Texas Forum*. No one ever quibbled about the politics of printing his article. They just did it.

Patrick intended to bring up a perspective that was not otherwise welcomed at UT. Do you think that might be a problem at UT? He wanted the journal to express a grass-roots sense of what Individual Rights were about and who they were for. He didn't want it to be just an intellectual legal argument.

The Journal is an important contribution that Patrick made as a human being. I talked to Suzanne Donovan the other day about her recollection of Patrick's organizing the *Texas Forum*. She said, "He understood rights from the bottom of his heart. Rights were very much a part of the fabric of his being. He emphatically believed that the *Texas Forum* was an opportunity to give more human voice to the issues that we understand intellectually."

In fact, one of the reasons the journal is making such a great contribution to law school literature is that it's *not* bound by the rules of the traditional law review. It's a powerful thing to work on a project that has the ability to open up another person's mind.

Show Me the Money

Remember the “forking over the money” part? Well, in 1992, Patrick eventually initiated a great deal of discussion at the law school, including taking on Dean Yudof. In a moment of weakness, some of the professors agreed that it would be a *good* idea to have a journal with alternative viewpoints.

Once Patrick convinced the Law School to take on some responsibility for the *Texas Forum*, the next step was figuring out how much the Individual Rights and Responsibilities Section was going to have to fund it.

According to Sheila Cheaney, Patrick told the Section members that they *had* to give money to the students.

The Section’s collective response was that wouldn’t be possible. It was simply out of the question. When he asked, “Why?” he was told, “Because it means we’ll have to give up our annual party.” Eventually, they grudgingly agreed, but told Patrick that he would have to be their speaker at the state bar convention and pay his own way. Some IRRAIRA folks had the idea that members would quit if they just got a book and no party. Some feared that they might lose the section altogether. It was either books or margaritas--and the books won. But seriously, they got behind it—in large part because Patrick was behind it.

Feedback

I do a lot of training in my work. I think feedback is important so I’m going to share a few comments with the law students from your subscribers:

Suzanne, executive director of Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, thinks it’s very good. She’s glad to see it’s out there.

Larry Sauer, a solo practitioner, enjoys the articles. He was pleased to see that the *Texas Forum* printed a quality article on jury nullification. Made him a little wistful, it did. You see, Larry’s been carrying around this article on jury nullification for twenty years. He just hasn’t gotten around to getting it published. So now, if he wants it published, he’ll have to find *another* forum!

Shelia, executive director of the Women’s Advocacy Project, said, “The response from the section is that people are pretty proud of it. It looks great.” And she loves working with the students. As an aside, she added, “Patrick would be proud to know that not only has the section continued its party, but it also pays for a law student party. So everybody’s happy, because now they have two parties.”

I think of Patrick often. I know we’ll all miss him. Patrick is one of those rare people I refer to as a “public interest angel.” But he had to act a little like the devil. He wasn’t afraid to irritate people and truly believed in and fought for the guarantees of our Constitution. And while he knew there are a great deal of irritating ideas *and* people, he upheld their right to freedom of speech. As proof of that, I see that Lino Graglia has also made it in the *Texas Forum*.

So you see, even though he’s gone, Patrick’s beliefs and ideas are living through the *Texas Forum* and for that we are all better human beings.