

On Charles W. Kettlewell

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Charles W. Kettlewell was a friend of mine. He mentored almost the entire early leadership of the Association of Professional Responsibility Lawyers, in addition to being one of the founders of the organization. He was unassuming, but wore an enormous bright blue turquoise ring that matched his eyes. Chuck had a vision about what professional responsibility law would be, long before it developed as a practice area in the legal profession.

He believed that ethics lawyers would become the envoys of the entire system of justice, because “[e]thics does not just regulate lawyers, it also regulates governments.” As a former president of the NOBC, he was well aware of the disciplinary aspects of representing lawyers, which was a small part of his practice. He anticipated the growth that this area created by the ever burgeoning cases involving disqualification, legal malpractice, and breach of fiduciary duties.

Chuck had specific likes and dislikes. He disfavored going back to the drawing board for new fangled rules favoring specialized areas of practice; he wasn’t fond of professors and their hypothetical interpretations of rules, and thought “flirtations with vignettes that [were] warm and fuzzy” were useless. Chuck was a stealth agent for change, and had a special method of accomplishing his goals. He believed that change could be accomplished through the Association of Professional Responsibility Lawyers, and he laid the ground work for that to occur.

Because of Chuck, early APRL programs focused on being practical and concrete, carrying the same message that change would occur naturally in an organic fashion. He generously shared his work product with professional responsibility lawyers throughout the nation. He knew that if everyone used the same fundamental lists or advised our clients on proper conflict consents or waivers, that would become the paradigm on a national level, and become the gold standard. Chuck’s vision for change was dynamic and quietly proactive.

Chuck created APRL with a specific ethos regarding how the organization would operate, and he imprinted his expectations on how we would treat each other. Chuck understood that we all needed somewhere to be nurtured. He knew that many of the practitioners of professional responsibility were extremely isolated in their home states and needed a place to grow.

Chuck’s vision was not limited to a regional or national level. He believed that we would be growing globally. Long before the debate on multijurisdictional practice or the current concerns regarding the increasing globalization of the practice of

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law, Chuck envisioned that APRL would be the international association for lawyers who represented lawyers.

Therefore, APRL went to Paris to meet with the Parisian Bar, and to Cambridge to meet with English, French and EU lawyers. When the Department of Defense wanted a program in China, they contacted Chuck to bring a group of APRL members to a Symposium in 2000 at the University of Hunan in Shanghai.

Chuck also expected that we would have memorable experiences during social events at our meetings. We took boats in the Everglades; rented yachts in Naples; and went to special tours of Aircraft Carriers in San Diego, which Chuck was able to arrange. Chuck laid the ground work for the members of our organization to grow into being active players advising all aspects of the legal profession, because he knew we would be advising governments. Two decades ago, he envisioned the members of APRL not as who they were, but as who they would become.