



UNC
SCHOOL OF LAW

NORTH CAROLINA LAW REVIEW

Volume 42 | Number 2

Article 3

2-1-1964

Van: My Teacher, Colleague, and Friend

Frederick B. McCall

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.law.unc.edu/nclr>



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Frederick B. McCall, *Van: My Teacher, Colleague, and Friend*, 42 N.C. L. REV. 274 (1964).

Available at: <http://scholarship.law.unc.edu/nclr/vol42/iss2/3>

This Comments is brought to you for free and open access by Carolina Law Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in North Carolina Law Review by an authorized administrator of Carolina Law Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact law_repository@unc.edu.

VAN: MY TEACHER, COLLEAGUE, AND FRIEND

FREDERICK B. McCALL*

It was my privilege to know Maurice Taylor Van Hecke for forty-two years. Through these years I knew him as my teacher, my colleague and my friend. However, it took very little time after our initial acquaintance for me to know him and love him for the genuine warmth of his friendship, to know and admire the brilliance of his mind, and to know and respect the breadth and depth of his scholarship.

I first met Van in the Fall of 1921 when, after a six year high school teaching career, I returned to the University to study law. At that time Van was just beginning his first year of teaching in the Law School as an Associate Professor. Even then he was an excellent teacher and, although the School because of its rather low entrance requirements did not always attract the better prepared student, Van at first took no cognizance of this fact and made no compromise either in the high standards he had set for himself as a teacher or in the quality of scholarship he demanded of his students. The more poorly prepared students, who did not quite know what was happening to them, grew somewhat apprehensive and in some cases even resentful that they were not doing so well in the courses taught "over their heads" by this newcomer to the faculty. Van, being the extremely sensitive person he was, almost immediately sensed this unrest among his students. Perhaps because I was a little more mature than some of the others, he called me into his office and asked what the trouble was. I explained to him that these boys were not used to such high standards and rigid disciplines of study as he was demanding of them and that he should give them time to become acclimated to the higher altitudes of legal study toward which he was leading them. Van understood what I was trying to tell him. He gave the students a little breathing time in which to catch up with him; they soon realized what he was trying to do for them and, before long, they and I were treading the *high*

*Professor of Law, University of North Carolina.

roads of legal learning in the footsteps of a master teacher. I have related the above incident not to show any ultimate compromise in Van's integrity as a teacher but only to show that he was also a wise and understanding man. There is no need to speak further of him as a teacher and a scholar—his distinguished career speaks for itself.

Soon after he had begun his first year of teaching Van decided that the law school should undertake the publication of a legal periodical of particular interest to North Carolina judges and lawyers. This would represent the fourth attempt to establish in this state such a periodical. The first was *The Carolina Law Repository* which ran into two volumes between 1813 and 1816. The second was *The North Carolina Law Journal* which also ran into two volumes from 1900 to 1902. In 1904 the *Law Journal* was revived under the name of the *North Carolina Journal of Law* which after running through two volumes ceased publication in 1905.¹

With characteristic energy, initiative, and foresight in planning Van set the wheels in motion for the publication of the first issue of the *North Carolina Law Review* which was to be the successor legal periodical to its four defunct predecessors—after a hiatus of sixteen or seventeen years. In the first issue of the new publication, June 1922, Van set forth in an editorial note some of the purposes to be served by such a journal to be published by the law school. He said in part:

It is hoped that this REVIEW may be of service to the law students, the law teachers, the members of the bar, and to the judges upon the bench, and, through them, to the people of the state.

As a supplement to the routine daily class work of the School, it will afford to the second and third year students, a means of intensive training in legal writing. . . .

To the faculty of the School, the REVIEW will be an added incentive to systematic research in the state law and a medium for the publication of the results achieved. To the members of the bar and the judges upon the bench, the REVIEW will make available, in the form of leading articles, editorial notes and comments, discussions of important legal problems, statements of the significance of outstanding recent state and federal decisions, and historical

¹ For a somewhat more complete history of these publications see 1 N.C.L. REV. 246 (1923). For a list of the articles in these earlier legal periodicals see 1 N.C.L. REV. 317-18 (1923).

accounts of the development of distinctive topics and doctrines of North Carolina law.²

That these goals have, in large part, been achieved is attested by the fact that, in their fulfillment, the *North Carolina Law Review* through over forty years of continuous publication has acquired a distinguished and authoritative position in the field of legal publications.

At the very beginning Van set high standards for the excellence of the infant publication. He simply would not tolerate mediocre work by anyone connected with its publication. To interject a personal note—I was fortunate enough in my first year of law to be selected by Van and the other faculty members to serve as a student editor. Van supervised the first case comment I wrote. I shall never forget his gentle but firm insistence upon clarity and conciseness in thought and expression. To mix the metaphor somewhat, he literally held one's toes to the fire as to every written word and phrase and sentence. Then after one had written a comment Van made him re-write and re-polish until the comment glowed to Van's satisfaction. It was an invaluable lesson to a fledgling lawyer who was later to become a law teacher.

One more personal note with reference to the *Law Review*—I have always been proud of the fact that I helped Van "get out" the very first issue of the *Review*. This means that after the first issue had come from the press Van and I spread the copies out on the dining room table in his home where we sacked them into envelopes and addressed them for mailing. It was a proud moment for both of us—and especially for Van who could look with satisfaction upon the first result of his excellent handiwork. It was also the foundation of a lasting monument to him.

With the exception of a few interim years, when Van was teaching at the University of Kansas and I was engaged briefly in the practice of law, I was associated with him almost continuously while he served the law school either as my Dean or as my colleague in the teaching of law. As Dean he was a fine administrator. Always fair with the students and faculty, he made his decisions concerning their welfare and that of the school after the most careful consideration he could bring to bear upon the problems presented through the use of that clear, incisive, analytical mind he possessed.

² 1 N.C.L. REV. 31 (1922).

He respected his faculty and his faculty reciprocated that respect. As a colleague he was a joy to work with. He was generous in his exchange of legal knowledge with me when I bogged down in problems that touched his specialized realms of equity and trusts. And, in a few isolated instances I was able to help him with some of his teaching problems.

It was a rare privilege for me to have known Van for so long and to have gained so much from him. In all that time I never found anything wrong with him. The Good Lord must have been especially pleased with the creation of such a man because in addition to endowing Van with a brilliant mind and a wonderful gift for friendship, He added to the mixture an extra pinch of the salt of the earth and an overly generous portion of the milk of human kindness.