

## THIS IS GARY

James E. Krier\*

The first time I met Gary, he fell asleep. This was in the spring of 1969. Gary and I were working as lawyers in Washington, D.C., and each of us had recently accepted offers to join the faculty of the UCLA School of Law. When I learned of our current shared location and future destination, I called Gary and invited him to dinner at my apartment in Georgetown. We ate and drank and talked long into the night, until Gary checked out. Later he woke up and left.

Or so I remember; the truth might well be that I fell asleep, judging from my dinner party behavior ever since, or maybe we both did. In any event, there began that evening a long and wonderful relationship that persisted until the day Gary died. As a colleague, Gary was my tutor and my cheerleader; as a friend, he was my confidant, personal advisor, ever loyal ally, my wife's great pal, and my children's virtual (and favorite) uncle; as a next door neighbor, he was a regular source of delight. When, eventually, I left UCLA for a colder clime, his home became mine away from home. Trips back to Los Angeles meant overnights at Gary's, breakfast at his dining table with the *Los Angeles Times*, visits to art museums, a night at a Dodgers' game (Gary held season tickets) or a Bruin basketball game, a movie or a play, or whatever. Usually we would go out together for a good dinner, too, but never an extravagant one. When it came to restaurants, Gary was a value investor, and in my experience he never picked a loser. With him, it was painless to grab the tab, but also fruitless, because Gary felt most comfortable sharing.

Gary shared everything. He shared his friends, a constantly growing Gary's Gang. (We never called ourselves that, but now I can't imagine why.) He shared his interests, which were eclectic: Gary read law review articles for fun(!), never mind the field of study, and he read the great literature along with mystery paperbacks, the latter being for him an especially favored genre (*zhan-er*, as Gary put it; once I asked him the correct pronunciation of some Latin phrase, and he said, "Who knows how they talked back then?"). Gary enjoyed drama and classical music and opera and old movies and new ones and every sort of art that Los Angeles provides (which

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is to say, every sort of art). He traveled widely (his Gang is an international club). He was a great sports fan—the kind who keeps track of trades, pay levels, statistics, and rule changes—and a skilled and determined competitor on the baseball diamond and the tennis and basketball courts. Ditto for card games and children’s games. He was a wicked player.

Gary’s life was so filled it spilled over. (So did his Mr. Coffee. My wife once saw it happening in his kitchen and alerted him. “Don’t worry,” he said, “that’s how I know it’s ready.”) And about all of his pastimes, as about his friendships, as about his teaching and his research, Gary was passionate. He rejected the idea that not everything worth doing is worth doing well.

I can’t recall a single letter from Gary, and I believe I could count his e-mail messages to me on two fingers. He was a telephone guy, and each of his calls was part of an ongoing conversation. I might not have had a single contact with him in three months, and then there would be a call, something like this:

PHONE: Ring.

ME: Hello.

GARY: Well, whadya think of *American Beauty*?

I talked with Gary often in the final stages of his illness; the last call I placed to him found his answering machine on the other end. “This is Gary. Leave a message and I’ll callya back.” But he didn’t. His brother did, a few days later. I’d never met him before. He said that he’d found my message and wanted me to know that Gary had died without being able to return some calls. That was an extraordinary courtesy, as appreciated as it was unnecessary. I had already heard the news from one of Gary’s Gang. Then I helped spread the word. Pretty soon everybody knew.