

REMEMBERING RICHARD GERSHON

*Gray Edmondson**

I am greatly honored to have the opportunity to pay tribute to Dean Richard Gershon. It is my pleasure to say a few words about how much of a joy it was to know him. From the first occasion we had to meet, I felt that he would be a person I would truly enjoy being around. That first impression was proven true each time I had the pleasure of interacting with Richard.

My first encounter with Richard was at the Mississippi Bar Convention in Sandestin, Florida, where Richard was the new, incoming dean of the University of Mississippi School of Law being introduced to the Mississippi legal community. I had just met Richard, and we were engaging in typical small talk when he was approached by his dinner companion (a law school representative charged with introducing him to the dinner guests), saying it was time to leave for a dinner event. This colleague asked Richard to go ahead and change clothes. At the time Richard was dressed casually, as one would for a beach themed event. Having been told the Bar Convention is a casual dress event, Richard explained that's all he came prepared to wear. Richard, a few others, and I scrambled together a dress shirt, tie, and jacket (if I recall correctly, all borrowed from those in conversation) for Richard to wear to dinner. He was not fazed in the least. Richard was completely relaxed about it and handled the situation with ease and charm.

I tell this story about Richard frequently when he comes up in conversation. Those who have been around me when it has come up are probably tired of hearing it. However, to me, it is such a good illustration of the man I ultimately got to know much

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better over time. Richard, the incoming law school dean, at his first event, being taken around to meet the Mississippi legal community, came ready to be laid back, casual, and most importantly, approachable. Even after being confronted about not being prepared for a more formal dinner, Richard was not shaken at all, and those around him worked to make sure he was taken care of for the dinner. His easy-going attitude toward what could have been a stressful situation was apparent. Also clear was how quickly those whom he had just met found him so genial as to be willing to step up and help, even offering this practical stranger the clothes off their backs. His kind demeanor and positive impression on those around him carried through all the years thereafter. To me, this story is a great example of who Richard was to those in his circle.

As the years went on, I got to know Richard in a number of different capacities. Like me, Richard was a tax, trust, and estate attorney. We had many conversations, both in person and over email, about our area of practice. Discussing these complex topics with Richard was easy. His relaxed approach allowed what could have been complicated to come through with ease. I appreciated that about Richard and know his students did too. Also, during most of Richard's tenure at the University of Mississippi School of Law, my wife, Dr. Macey Edmondson, served as Assistant Dean of Students. Knowing that she reported to someone who cared about her and her students was a comfort to both Macey and me. Throughout those years, it was a joy to watch my wife and family benefit from such a great working relationship. It made her work life more enjoyable and rewarding. For that, I will be forever grateful to Dean Gershon.

More important than any of these roles, Richard was a friend. I enjoyed sitting with Richard, sometimes over a bourbon, discussing our families, hobbies, etc. This is despite Richard's unfortunate support of the Atlanta Falcons. My family are avid New Orleans Saints fans, tense rivals of the Atlanta Falcons. Practically every time the two teams played, either my wife or I would share exchanges with Richard, ribbing each other about this rivalry. Of course, this was all in jest. It was something we, and I expect Richard, enjoyed about our friendship. Once again, Richard's demeanor made him approachable and a pleasure to

spend time in conversation with. As Richard became ill, and after his untimely passing, I reflected on those conversations with regret that we did not have more of them—while fondly remembering those times.

All of that said, while Richard was laid-back and approachable, he was also a dedicated professional. Certainly, most people reading this likely know that he was dean at the Charleston School of Law and Texas Wesleyan School of Law, leading both schools through an accreditation process. Likewise, most in the law school community know of his dedication to his students. What many may not have seen was his dedicated work in research and writing until the end of his life. I had the pleasure of discussing with Richard his work on *“Till Death Do Us Part”? Why Does Mississippi Value the Spouse Breaking That Vow More Than the Spouse Keeping It?: A Proposal to Reform Mississippi’s Surviving Spouse Protections*.¹ Likewise, I worked with Richard on portions of the book *Mississippi Estate Planning, Will Drafting, and Estate Administration with Forms*, co-authored with Richard A. Courtney.² Richard dedicated himself to this until he was unable to continue due to his declining health. Throughout those processes, even nearing the end of his life, Richard not only remained the likable person he always had been but also held on to the professional dedication that contributed to his many successes.

Those who had the pleasure of knowing Richard perhaps all share many of my sentiments. It was difficult losing him but was an honor to have enjoyed the time we had. The University of Mississippi School of Law, its faculty, its staff, its students, its alumni, and all others whose lives Richard touched are better because he was there (despite being an Atlanta Falcons fan).

¹ I. Richard Gershon, *“Till Death Do Us Part”? Why Does Mississippi Value the Spouse Breaking that Vow More than the Spouse Keeping It?: A Proposal to Reform Mississippi’s Surviving Spouse Protections*, 91 MISS. L.J. 547 (2023).

² I. RICHARD GERSHON & RICHARD A. COURTNEY, *MISSISSIPPI ESTATE PLANNING, WILL DRAFTING, AND ESTATE ADMINISTRATION WITH FORMS* (2025).