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3-2021

### Tribute to Bob Burdick

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## TRIBUTE TO BOB BURDICK

NAOMI MANN\*

In losing Bob, we have truly lost a legal giant. He was a visionary in poverty law. He led significant litigation that improved the lives of countless individuals in the Commonwealth. It is because of him, a team of legal aid attorneys, and his students that individuals who are considered mentally incapacitated are entitled to *Rogers*<sup>1</sup> hearings before being administered medication. It is also under his leadership that student attorneys throughout the Commonwealth can get attorney's fees for their legal services organizations.<sup>2</sup> Through his guidance and teaching, generations of law students have learned how to infuse their work (wherever they may end up working) with a discrimination and poverty law lens.

Bob's legal acumen and never-flagging enthusiasm for protecting the rights of those living in poverty are an inspiration that I carry in my heart, as do many others. Legal services work is by nature grinding, with the never-ending injustices that clients face serving as a source of inspiration to do more and also, at times, wearing away at your energy and your soul. Bob got up every day and refused to let the structural inequities that the program faced get in the way of his belief that it was possible for justice to be achieved. He got up every day and fought against injustice. He powerfully lawyered with justice in his heart and as his goal.

In losing Bob, we have lost a tremendous teacher. Bob poured his heart into his teaching. He spent decades thinking about his teaching, how to improve what was already highly polished teaching, and how to help us all be better teachers too. Every fall, he would present us with new ideas about how to make the program better for students and how to innovate. He loved his students, and they loved him back, crediting him with changing their lives and serving as a source of inspiration long after they left the clinic.

In losing Bob, I have lost a mentor. Bob was the person I went to when I had a legal quandary and needed someone to talk it over with. He always made time, whether it was during the workweek or on weekends. I will never forget how nonjudgmental and understanding he was when we spoke. He had a way of helping me be a better and more thoughtful lawyer, without ever feeling judged or discouraged.

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<sup>1</sup> *Rogers v. Comm'r of the Dep't of Mental Health*, 458 N.E.3d 308 (Mass. 1983).

<sup>2</sup> *Darmetko v. Bos. Hous. Auth.*, 393 N.E.2d 395 (Mass. 1979).

In losing Bob, his family also lost a caring and devoted husband, father, and grandfather. Bob was devoted to his wife Jane Burdick; his four children (Alissa Bopp, Jonathan Bopp, Kate Burdick, and Carly Sobon) and their partners (Richard Kuang, Allan Sobon, and Pablo Tercero); and his two grandchildren (Ariela and Rafael Tercero). His eyes would brighten when he spoke about his family, and he loved them each so much.

In losing Bob, we have all lost a source of inspiration. Bob never hesitated to shoot for the moon and try to achieve what a more cautious and less visionary lawyer would shy away from. In reflecting on this aspect of him, I ran across the saying: "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss you will land among the stars." Thank you, dear Bob, for all you gave us. You are now among the stars (though I personally think you made it to the moon).