

With a heavy heart, I reflect on the joy of remembering Mike Clover. I'm so sorry that I can't be there, as we have a family wedding to attend.

I was Mike's colleague for nineteen years. He hired me in 1976, and I hope he never regretted it. I certainly didn't. Not only was the University a wonderful place to work, as it was still infused with the Wisconsin Idea, but Mike was the best colleague any junior faculty could ever hope for. Mike did everything to ease my transition, even finding me an apartment before I arrived.

Although there was one time when he did sort of drop the ball. A few years later, after Jane and I had returned to Madison from getting married in New Jersey, we got a call one Saturday night from Mike, asking where we were. Why, we're right here in our apartment. But, says Mike, you're missing the wedding party Dotty and I are giving for you. It turns out, Mike had invited everyone but us. We raced over, a bit disheveled. Every time we have sherry in the beautiful stemware they gave us as a wedding present, we chuckle over that.

Okay, so Mike could be a bit absentminded. But in all important ways, he modeled what it was to be a teacher and colleague. Mike was always direct, clear, and fair. In those days, in order to protect student confidentiality we'd post final grades on our office doors listed by student ID numbers only. But Mike never put those grade sheets on his door. He said he didn't believe in identifying students by numbers and would rather meet with each student to give them their final grades. Another time, we were discussing something I thought was a bit delicate and closed his office door. He got up and opened it. Those were the kinds of values Mike thought the academy should stand for, and he made it his responsibility to teach them to his junior colleague.

One of the many things I wish I could have learned better from Mike was his ability to ask great questions at academic talks. Partway through a lecture, you could watch that smile growing on his face, that sense of absorption and realization, and his hand would always be one of the first to go up. A chipmunk grin on his face, he would absolutely nail a key point, never being challenging or belligerent, always positive and advancing ideas. It was never about his own ego or scoring points, but about intellectual engagement.

Another important lesson was how he treated everyone equally. When Sir Ronald Syme, the world's most famous Roman historian and an elegant scholar of the old school, came to Madison, Mike threw a large dinner party. To this Knight of the British Empire who held the most prestigious professorship at Oxford, Mike served his own recipe chili and cornbread, washed down with beer. Sir Ronald surely had been offered more than enough fake French food and overpriced wine, and I suspect he appreciated Mike's simple gesture toward his own Southwestern roots.

I mentioned that Mike was most responsible for hiring me. But I came close to not getting that offer. After my interview at the American Historical Association Meetings in Atlanta, I was convinced I had messed up. So, I went back to my hotel room and downed a full glass of my roommate's bourbon. Just then, I got a call from Mike that he was

downstairs and wanted to talk further. I immediately began doing jumping jacks in the shower while brushing my teeth. We walked out into unseasonably cool weather, but I had forgotten my jacket. Shivering and still a few sheets to the wind, I kept my face turned away from Mike for fear he'd smell my breath. I doubt he noticed, because Mike never scrutinized people closely. After I was safely hired, I told him that story, and he laughed and laughed. Laughter was one of Mike's many wonderful qualities. Getting Mike to laugh at a story was truly one of life's greatest joys.

As an historian, Mike had uncanny linguistic skills, a sharp eye for detail, and a deep love of learning. But I'm not sure Mike achieved his fullest potential as a productive scholar, largely because he was so devoted to teaching his students and to following his curiosity wherever it led him. Everyone knew Mike had a vast repository of knowledge and so kind a heart that made him always willing to share that knowledge. Like Socrates, he wasn't so much skilled at producing something fully formed himself, as he was at inspiring others through personal engagement.

And maybe a field so famously cutthroat and nitpicking as Classical history wasn't the best place for his large heart and expansive interests. In the two decades we worked closely together, I never once knew him to be mean or harsh to anyone, or to jump on a small point of interpretation or gloat over someone's mistake. Mike may just have been too good for the rest of us. Of course, I can almost hear him laughing at my saying that.

In all the years since, I've never known a finer person or colleague.

Godspeed, Mike Clover.

Ken Sacks