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Dean David D. Meyer*

On first impression, General William K. Suter can seem imposing, particularly to someone already a bit unnerved by a first encounter with the august institution he has represented for the past twenty-two years.

The former college basketball standout towers over most people around him. He is also a decorated combat veteran who once shuttled in Huey helicopters to try cases across South Vietnam and went on to lead the Army JAG Corps. He is still known as “General Suter”—or simply “The General”—in the marble hallways of the Supreme Court.

I met him during the nervous first week of a clerkship at the Court, at the end of the General’s first Term as Clerk. A commanding figure who kept the mountains of petitions, briefs, orders, and opinions moving with military efficiency, he also proved to be as much an ambassador as a general. Warm and gracious, confident but easy-going, Bill Suter set a standard for professionalism that helped orient each year’s new crop of law clerks and set them at ease.

He had the same calming effect on lawyers arguing their first case before the Court. One of my former co-clerks who returned to the Court as an advocate years later recalled: “General Suter must have done it hundreds of times, but he was engaging and reassuring, even as he gave a few gentle bits of advice (as I recall, one was: Don’t try to be funny). He came across as a friendly, supportive face of the Court, representing the Justices in ways that they could not themselves, given their position.”

His decency and care touched lawyers well before and long after their argument. When he learned that a Mississippi lawyer whose home was washed away in Hurricane Katrina was heartbroken to have lost the prized quill that is every advocate’s souvenir from arguing at the Court, he quietly arranged to have the treasure replaced. When shepherding new attorneys to be sworn in to the Supreme Court Bar, he made a point to greet the group personally beforehand, gently brief

* Dean, Tulane University Law School. J.D., B.A., University of Michigan. To read this tribute as it was originally published, see David D. Meyer, *Bill Suter: General, Ambassador, Tulanian*, SCOTUSBLOG (July 12, 2013, 12:51 PM), <http://www.scotusblog.com/2013/07/bill-suter-general-ambassador-tulanian/>.

them on the protocol of the occasion, and, most importantly, make them feel genuinely a part of the Supreme Court “family.”

Since becoming Dean of Tulane Law School, I have seen Bill, a 1962 Tulane law graduate, in a new light. He came to New Orleans as a newlywed law student and a star athlete from Trinity University and proved every bit the standout as a scholar at Tulane. Decades later, in his office at the Court, surrounded by mementoes of Tulane, Bill regaled me with stories of the highlights (and hijinks) of his student days in New Orleans and their formative influence. Now I understand that the seemingly rare combination of traits I long admired in Bill Suter—high-achieving yet down-to-earth, ambitious yet unfailingly decent, professional yet fun-loving—is characteristically Tulanian.

In congratulating Bill on a lifetime of distinguished service to our country, I also assure him that his alma mater takes as much pride in him as he does in it.