

A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT A. WEEMS

Gerald Blessey

You have kindly asked for a brief reflection in honor of Professor Robert Weems. Your request brings to mind that people often say, "I need a good lawyer?"

A "good lawyer" is first a good human being. Bob Weems is first and foremost the model of a good man: loving husband and father, intellectually honest, free of prejudice, charitable to strangers, self-effacing, active in his civic and professional communities, and a loyal friend through thick and thin.

However, a "great lawyer" is a good person who loves the law and continuously studies it, practices at the highest level of mental and physical discipline, cares about the humanitarian aspects of each case, mentors young lawyers, and knows that all sides win when justice is done. By this measure. Bob Weems is a great lawyer.

During the tumultuous "Freedom Summer" of 1964, I first met Bob Weems as we entered law school at Ole Miss. Bob was older, having served in the Army. Immediately Bob became both mentor, friend, and leader of our study group, applying his calm, gentle, witty and objective critiques to our political opinions and legal studies.

The Civil Rights Movement was thrusting many changes upon law and society, stimulating intense debate among students and faculty. The law school was a crucible of thought and action. Under the courageous leadership of Dean Joshua Morse and an outstanding faculty, the Ole Miss Law School quickly became a leader in racial integration and fearlessly demonstrated to state leaders the fundamental value of respect for the rule of law.

In the midst of such challenging times, the young Bob Weems was a leader of his peers, already exhibiting wisdom beyond his years, through his quiet, humorous, steadfast adherence to truth and a government of laws.

It seems clear now that from those early years, Bob was destined to be a law professor, bringing all of those wonderful

youthful qualities to teach by example what it means to be a “great lawyer.”

Bob’s legacy is abundantly evident in thousands of his students who now are outstanding lawyers, judges, and public officials.

These days, when I hear someone say, “I need a good lawyer,” I say, “you need a great lawyer, like Bob Weems.”

Congratulations to Bob on his well-earned retirement.