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Requiem for Michael Lewis

RICK BALES*

When I was growing up, the highest compliment one could say about someone was that he or she was “good people.” This had nothing to do with having a particular skill, or with a particular performance, or with the person having an agreeable temperament. It was a statement of character, reserved only for the handful of people one might run across in an entire lifetime who could be trusted absolutely, under any circumstances—someone who always thought first of, and saw the best in, others. Mike Lewis was good people.

Before entering law school, Mike graduated first in his class from Top Gun school and proudly served his country with a distinguished career as a Navy pilot. He was a Radar Intercept Officer in an embarked F-14 squadron on the USS Independence, flying in Desert Shield and enforcing no-fly zones over Iraq. Professor Nancy Armstrong’s remembrance provides a much more detailed biography of Mike,¹ but I wanted to start with Mike’s military record because it was such an important part of Mike’s character.

At the College of Law, Mike was a star—he did everything well. To his students, he was a teacher, mentor, and role model of all role models. He won teaching awards and knew his students by name. They came to him for academic advice, career advice, life advice, and just to talk futbol. Though I offered him a lighter teaching load as his illness intensified, Mike would have none of that. He wasn’t just teaching law; he was touching lives.

Mike likewise was a star to his faculty colleagues, and to me. He was a friend to all, and a mentor and role model to other faculty. Even as a relatively junior member of the faculty he took on some of the most difficult and thankless work—often work requiring faculty consensus (a herculean task under the best of circumstances)—and always did it well. He was a prolific scholar and speaker, taking the name of Ohio Northern to readers and listeners throughout the United States and the world, but always graciously giving of his time to speak at a faculty or student forum here at home.

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1. See Nancy A. Armstrong, *A Tribute to Mike Lewis*, 42 OHIO N.U. L. REV. 855, 855-56 (2016).

Mike's scholarship and speaking focused on national security law. He often took a provocative and, in the academic world, unpopular position on hot-button items such as the use of drones in modern warfare. Though others can speak much more eloquently than I about the depth and quality of Mike's scholarship,² my focus is on what Mike's scholarship said about the depth and quality of his character. Many people in the academic community disagreed—often vehemently—with Mike on law and policy matters. To a person, however, they all have described how even fervent disagreement never dented the respect and dignity that Mike gave to their arguments, or to the personal warmth and friendship that he showed them both privately and publically.

Most importantly, Mike Lewis was a wonderful husband, father, and friend. Everyone who knew him knew of his deep love for his family. His daughter Sarah was the light of his life, matched only by the love he showed his wife Danya. Mike was taken from them, and from us, far too early.

Mike's view from an F-14 cockpit was one that few of us will ever share. Mike's view today is better still, so I am certain that he knows that he lives on in all of us, and that we miss him profoundly.

2. See Robert Luther III, *The Influence and Example of Professor Michael W. Lewis*, 42 OHIO N.U. L. REV. 883, 884-85 (2016).