

Eleanor Swift: A Mentor of Courage and Grace

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While I never had the right schedule or good luck to take a class from Eleanor Swift, she was one of my most important teachers at Boalt. As the faculty advisor to the *California Law Review* (CLR) when I was Editor-in-Chief, and as a mentor then and since, Eleanor has taught me the value of a courageous yet graceful voice both to individual people and to institutions.

The CLR Board of Directors, of which Eleanor was a member, provided wise counsel as Rebecca Engrav, the wonderful Managing Editor, and I tried to balance running a journal with keeping up in classes and at summer jobs. Like anyone in those positions, we became more competent as the year progressed and as we faced and overcame challenges—from working with authors who did not care to be edited by students to learning the intricacies of the university's hiring rules. We learned early on that we could rely on Eleanor for unflagging encouragement, and we depended on her support until the very end. Her faith that we could handle whatever problems we faced slowly became our own.

Whether we sought her out or she dropped by the CLR office on the way up to hers, I noticed that Eleanor attended completely to us when she was with us. We were but one small part of her full life—introducing students to the complexities of evidence and standards of legal ethics, sharing lunch on a Simon Hall balcony with Bob Cole, enjoying the activities of a beloved family outside work—but she always listened carefully to us and heard not only our questions but also who we were, what we stood for, and what we hoped for.

That taught me, in turn, to pay closer attention to the way Eleanor managed to achieve so much at Boalt. I saw that she seemed always to have the courage to speak up, that she always did so with grace—which seemed to enable her to remain above the fray, with her focus consistently on the goal. I saw that, to her, being part of the institution means being responsible for

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making the institution better for all of its inhabitants—students, faculty, and administrators—not simply to make it work for her. As I have seen more clearly since I graduated, Eleanor’s attention to Rebecca and me was just one example in a career filled with tireless attention to the institution and its people. Because her courage—always pushing for improvements, never being complacent when Boalt could accomplish more—is twinned with grace, Eleanor has managed not only to make Boalt a better school, but also to become a beloved friend and mentor to many along the way.

Despite earning emerita status, Eleanor has continued to focus on the next challenge to improve the school: ensuring Boalt has the capacity to provide an excellent legal education to those who will make our legal system representative of the population and responsive to the needs of an evolving society. She maintains an unwavering focus on two goals. First, she is determined that Boalt will serve students from many different backgrounds and with many different interests. Second, she is resolute that Boalt continue to attract and retain faculty members who have the intellect, background, and experience to enable those students to surpass their goals. Her views are at once visionary and pragmatic. Eleanor’s tireless and selfless willingness to take responsibility for institutions and their impact on the people in them is a reminder to me that courage and grace do not get to rest.