

LESSONS LEARNED

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Stories of a Teacher and Teaching

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*For my students from whom I have learned much, and in memory
of two among them—Stuart Oelbaum and Chaitanya Maddali.*

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PREFACE

This book is about lessons learned (both conferred and received) by a fictitious protagonist, E. Randall Mann, who had been a law teacher at a major law school for over fifty years. There are nine stories or chapters that comprise this book. The stories appear as written in the first person by Mann and a fictitious student, Billie Williams, who served as his research assistant after he had retired and ultimately wrote two of the stories in remembrance following Mann's death. Although the context for lessons learned is law school and legal education, the lessons are intended to be transcendent. They explore the complex ingredients of life that often enrich us all. Courage. Resilience and Survival. Introspection, Self-Knowledge and Awareness. Death and Loss. Race. Trust. Friendship. Love. And above all Inspiration.

Despite the appearance of Mann and Williams as authors, I am the true author and, like Mann, a law teacher for over fifty years. To be sure, this book could have been written differently; for example, in the third person or as non-fiction. And if fiction, I could have appeared as the protagonist as well as the author. Yet this book of stories is not an embellished autobiography, an inference by readers I want studiously to avoid. Certainly, the lessons learned are lessons I embrace. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that only fiction allowed me to depart from personal experience and real life, and to disguise and borrow from others, and especially to completely fabricate. Best of all, it offered the joy and freedom to let conversations among characters take me in unexpected directions that led to new insights, new twists, better stories, and heightened messages for life and living. Something legal writing for over fifty years never allowed.

So I hope you enjoy these stories, because I loved every moment in creating them.

David M. Becker
April 2019

