

FILLING SOME BIG SHOES

A TRIBUTE TO RETIRING COURT REVIEW EDITOR JUDGE STEVE LEBEN

As noted in the final *Court Review* issue of 2017, Judge Steve Leben has stepped down from his co-editor position. Judge Leben passionately served the American Judges Association in this role for 20 years.

Below we have gathered tributes to Judge Leben from a few of the people who have had the pleasure of working with him as an editor of *Court Review*. In addition, please see the crossword puzzle in this issue developed by Judge Victor Fleming in honor of Judge Leben.

It was July 2008 when Steve Leben's email floated in over the electronic transom. The author of the annual reviews of the U.S. Supreme Court's past Terms was ill. A mutual friend, Phil Frickey, suggested that I might cover the Court's criminal law decisions. I have no idea why Steve thought I would be suitable, except that Phil was a fellow Kansan, and so Phil's judgment must have been impeccable. In any event, Steve graciously extended the invitation, and I was delighted to accept.

Steve edited my reviews for ten Court Terms. I've not had the good fortune to meet Steve in person, but I believe I know him well. He is a master of the big picture and the smallest of details. He manages to stay on top of an enormous number of tasks. Steve has a wonderful, dry sense of humor. He's loyal—even to someone who is not a Kansan. And I've never had a better editor: Steve combines a sharp eye with a light touch.

Along with the many readers of *Court Review*, I'll miss Steve's guiding hand. I'm so grateful to him for his years of service to *Court Review* and, especially, for the skill, patience and kindness he has shown to me.

Chuck Weisselberg
Shannon C. Turner Professor of Law
University of California, Berkeley

Judge Steve Leben's tenure with *Court Review* (20 years!) brought high quality information—via articles but also by means of white papers, reviews, essays, and a resource page (or two)—in highly readable prose that judges and others could directly utilize (e.g., “Recent Decisions of the United States Supreme Court”) or be inspired to learn more about (e.g., “Procedural Fairness: A Key Ingredient in Public Satisfaction”). I served as Judge Steve Leben's Co-Editor for eight years starting in 2007. I have worked with a lot of collaborators in my academic history, from co-teachers to co-reviewers to co-editors. No one with whom I have collaborated has been as easy or gratifying to work with. He is a clear thinker and excellent writer, positively reflecting on a previous stint as a journalist. He is generous with his time, seemingly always available unless he was on the bench or writing an opinion. He was generous with providing opportunities, not only for a non-judge like me but also for my students and colleagues. I had been introduced to Steve by Dr. Pam Casey from the National Center for State Courts, who told me I would be grateful to her for making the contact. She was right. I learned

so much about law and the judicial profession from Steve. I am not alone, as Steve's 2014 William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence (“a judge who demonstrates integrity, fairness and knowledge of the law”) attests. Steve is one of the smartest people I know, and his knowledge about so many matters is both deep and extensive. He is a delightful person, with a dry wit and keen insights about law and its context in society. He is warm, and he is patient with his authors, journal production staff, and specifically this former Co-Editor! Steve's service will be missed. His impact on the journal will endure.

Professor Alan Tompkins
Co-Editor of *Court Review*, 2007-2015

I had the pleasure of working with Judge Steve Leben in my tenure on the Executive Board with the AJA. I witnessed him come up through the ranks as a new member and later serve as President of the Organization. If that wasn't enough, as it is for most, Steve went on to take *Court Review* under his wing and continued the tradition of a first-class publication for a first-class organization. His tireless dedication will be sorely missed in the future and we will never have another one man show like him again.

Chief Judge James F. McKay III
Court of Appeal Fourth Circuit

I served as Vice President when Steve was President of AJA so in some respects, I was his “understudy.” Steve, a gentleman and a scholar, also co-authored the white paper for AJA on Procedural Fairness during my term as President. It was difficult enough for me to meet the deadline of writing the “President's Column” for the *Court Review* during my tenure. I cannot imagine the time invested to oversee the execution of such a fine periodical for 20 years! My thanks should be added to countless others for a job well done.

Eileen A. Olds
President AJA 2007-2008

Working with Steve when I was president of AJA gave me a much clearer insight into Steve's amazing contribution to the aspiration of AJA to make better judges. In further pursuit of all things intellectual Steve's intuitively practical and efficient mind organized the content of *Court Review* in ways which make it accessible to the minds of judges and scholars. I have come to appreciate how important his work as Editor of *Court Review* has been in attracting new members—our life's blood. Kudos to Steve for keeping the blood flowing during his 20 years editing *Court Review*.

Hon. Elliott L. Zide
Retired MA Trial Court Judge, Past President of AJA

While I was a longtime fan of *Court Review*, I did not meet Steve until 2013. I submitted a rather sorry start to an article on a new approach to civil case management. Steve could see the potential and paired me with the perfect editor to turn that raw idea into a viable article. He gave freely of his time and talent to help me develop the concept and then see the idea mature even beyond the article. Steve is one of those rarest talents in today's legal world, a gifted mentor giving of himself to help others reach their potential. I was truly honored when Steve asked me to be one of the co-editors that will try to follow in his footsteps.

David Prince
District Court Judge and Co-Editor of *Court Review*.

In my three years working with Judge Leben on *Court Review*, I was struck by how optimistic he was about the publishing process. While I was nervously waiting on a response to a last-minute author query or growing skeptical that a late article was going to materialize, Judge Leben seemed unconcerned. In his 20 years as editor, I guess he had learned that it somehow always worked out. Or maybe more accurately, he had learned how to make sure it always worked out. He used his connections across the country to put together insightful special issues, his social skills to get quick responses from authors, his flexibility to change the contents of an issue if necessary. Even after so many years at the editor's desk, Judge Leben still cared about the small details as well as the big picture. He sought out articles on important topics rather than simply relying on unsolicited submissions, and he recently added two regular features ("Thoughts from Canada" and a crossword puzzle). His confidence that we would put out a high-quality issue each quarter made it so, and his attitude and dedication made working alongside him a pleasure.

Justine Greve
Research Coordinator, Jackson County (Missouri)
Family Court
Associate editor of *Court Review*, 2014-2017

I have never met Steve Leben. However, I have had a great deal of contact with him. Since commencing my regular column for *Court Review* ("Thoughts From Canada"), we have communicated on a regular basis. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Steve. He has been helpful, considerate and encouraging. Any time I needed assistance, he provided it immediately.

Steve, I will miss discussing the column with you.
Best wishes on your next project.

Judge Wayne Gorman

I had the honor and privilege of working with Steve Leben during my term as AJA President in 2015-2016. Steve was quick with a gentle reminder to send the "President's Column" to him. Over the many years Steve has been editor, *Court Review* has continued to improve. We will certainly miss his wisdom and wit in *Court Review* and, hopefully, will continue to benefit from his guidance as he assumes an advisory role. We trust that Steve will remain as an active AJA Past President and continue to add his insight and experience to AJA's continuing success.

Thank you, Steve, for a job well done and for your many sacrifices on behalf of all at AJA!

Judge John Conery

When he was looking for someone who might be willing to write an annual review of the Supreme Court's civil cases, Steve stumbled upon me through our mutual friend, Gail Agrawal. I'm grateful to her for introducing me to Steve, and I'm grateful to Steve for taking a leap of faith with me. Any opportunity to try to be of service to the AJA is an opportunity worth taking, but having the chance to undertake that work with someone of Steve's intellect and sensibilities has been beyond wonderful. I join countless others in wishing him many happy and productive years ahead.

Todd Pettys
H. Blair and Joan V. White Chair in Civil Litigation
University of Iowa College of Law

As AJA's Association Manager, I have worked with Steve during his entire tenure as Editor. Steve's dedication to producing a journal of which AJA can be extremely proud is inspiring. *Court Review* is a fitting product for "The Voice of the Judiciary™" thanks to Steve's many years of hard work!

Shelley Rockwell
AJA Association Manager

Getting to work as Steve's co-editor of *Court Review* has been a highlight of my career. As a law-psychology professor, I often do research or read other people's research wishing it could get into the hands of judges. Steve empowered me to do just that and along the way gave me insights into what judges wanted to know. I will also never forget the swiftness of his email responses. I would just barely be through the email from an author's submission of an article and Steve would be emailing me with his detailed and thoughtful responses about the article submission. It was clear on multiple occasions that he was some sort of time wizard!

Eve Brank
Co-editor of *Court Review*, 2015- present

I first met Steve when I was the law clinic director at Washburn Law School and he was a trial court judge in suburban Kansas City way back in 1996. Steve and I served on various panels together at different CLEs for the Kansas Bar Association and we instantly developed a professional collaborative connection around research, writing, and teaching. We edited one another's work, and challenged each other's assumptions before live (if captive) CLE audiences. When Steve became the editor of *Court Review* two decades ago, he invited me to serve on the board of editors. He told me it was his vision to raise the publication to a "must read" for judges in the US and Canada. And so he did, with grace and good humor. Soon after that invitation to advise him as a member of the board, he had charmed me into writing articles and ultimately edit-

ing more than one specialty issue on domestic violence. When I moved to Colorado and later became a judge myself, I continued to turn to Steve for his insightful guidance and expertise on the academic side of the law. I am proud to say that for over 22 years Steve has been a mentor and a friend. As one of the four individuals who will struggle to fill his legacy of excellence with *Court Review*, I can tell you that he will be missed but never far from our work. Thank you, Steve. I hope we make you proud.

Hon. Julie Kunce Field
District Court Judge
Fort Collins, Colorado
Co-Editor, *Court Review*

20 years working with Steve has given me an appreciation for his meticulous attention to language and the art of writing. As a graphic designer I focus on visual communication, the readability of text and graphics, but Steve's command of the word and the nuances of punctuation and grammar gave me insights into the importance of communicating meaning, especially to an audience of judges who's interpretation of language has such a great impact on our society. Thanks for two decades of dedication to *Court Review*, Steve ... and no, even you can't edit time!

Gratitude and best wishes for your future endeavors.

Mike Fairchild
"Our layout guy," m-Design Studio

THANK YOU, JUDGE LEBEN!

"Be a good editor. The Universe needs more good editors, God knows."
— Kurt Vonnegut

After hundreds of articles and many, many thousands of words, Judge Steve Leben is retiring as the Editor of *Court Review*.

A heartfelt "thank you" to Judge Leben for his steadfast stewardship of *Court Review* for the past two decades. Twenty years ago, Judge Leben envisioned changing *Court Review* into an important "must-read" journal for judges in the U.S. and Canada. He accomplished that goal and we are all the better for it. Thank you, Judge Leben, for sharing your editorial gifts and insights with so many of us over so many years.

We will miss your humor, passion, and light, yet thoughtful, editorial touch.

Put away your Blue Book and enjoy your free time!