
CPE: The Center for Professional Ethics

by Robert P. Lawry

Professor of Law

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In the fall of 1978 a rotund, white-haired, amiable, energetic gentleman came knocking on my office door.

"I'm Bob Clarke," he said, wrapping a warm hand around mine and grinning an elfin grin. "I'm a friend of Ollie Schroeder's. Something's got to be done about the lack of ethical awareness in the professions. Case Western Reserve University is uniquely constituted to become a center for consciousness-raising in

this area. Ollie said you were the man to see. Would you help me do something about all of this?"

If I didn't actually say "yes" before Bob's bottom sank into my orange-colored canvas visitor's chair, I know I said "yes" in my heart just because of the forthright manner of the man and the twinkle in his eyes. Oh, yes, and there was the incantation of the magic name—Ollie Schroeder. I had been at the Law School three years,

more than enough time to know that the Gov'ner was my kind of man. He had (and has) a larger vision of the universe than most mere mortals, and he had a way of hugging you just by bidding you good morning or bouncing his ample eyebrows up and down. This Clarke fellow seemed possessed of the same qualities. I thought if I got in their way, some of that stuff might rub off.

Bob began his pitch to me with a

story of an Oliver Schroeder failure. Ollie was convinced that if leaders from the fields of law, medicine, and religion could come together in dialogue, "good things" would happen for the planet. So he convened a representative group of lawyers, doctors, and clergy to come together and talk about Faith, Justice, and Health. From all reports, the meeting was a disaster. There was no real dialogue—only bickering and suspicion—and surely no "good things" resulted. Except one: Bob Clarke was here in my office.

I had been hired primarily to teach Professional Responsibility at the Law School, and I had already been teaching an interdisciplinary course in the undergraduate school, groping to find a way to become an integral part of the larger university community. If I was not quite "the man to see," I surely was a possible partner in any enterprise that dealt with professional ethics and cross-disciplinary endeavors.

Somewhere along the course of that first meeting Bob Clarke and I agreed to venture forward. We had no fixed ideas as to what to do or how to it. But we sallied forth, two Don Quixotes, nodding in comradly appreciation at the third Quixote, Don Ollie, who had his eye on some other windmill somewhere else.

What to do? I had been reading Sessela Bok's new book, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*. It was an extraordinary effort to do what we wanted to do: explore moral choices across professional lines and in that murky area where the professional in us bumps up hard against the larger person, who demands "more" and sometimes "different" than the professional knows how to give. So we asked via campus-wide posters who would like to come together and talk about Sessela Bok's book. And lo! Folks from social work, medicine, law, nutrition, biomedical engineering, and campus ministry came together to talk about lying, professional education, the integration of the personal and the professional. We called ourselves the Professional Ethics Planning Committee because we had big plans. We would hold conferences and seminars, write everybody in every school and department, and invite others to join with us, to do what we were doing—talk about moral choice as professionals and as people.

On first conference was held on March 31, 1979. Realizing how much the entire atmosphere inside the professional school contributes to students' understanding of their professional role, we decided to focus our attention on Personal Integrity and Professional Life: The Socialization of the Student. We asked the Law School's Ted Mearns to keynote

the conference because of his unique multidisciplinary perspective and his rich personal gifts. Donald Whitman, then the university's vice president for professional studies, found \$400 for us, and the dean of the Law School, Lindsey Cowen, kicked in another \$100 from his discretionary fund and opened the Moot Courtroom and lower rotunda for our use. More than a hundred people came and were nourished. (We served a hot lunch as well as intellectual and moral fare.)

Through the years since that heady beginning, the Center for Professional Ethics (CPE to insiders) has formally produced nearly sixty conferences and seminars. In addition to the many talented members of the university community who have served as speakers at our events, nationally known philosophers in the field of professional ethics have graced us with their wisdom and presence. Daniel Callahan of the Hastings Center drew 250 people to a session in Harkness Chapel to talk about ethics in the university community. William May of the Kennedy Institute enthralled us when he spoke on the meaning of the professional's obligation to public service.

We did some unique things too. In 1980 we performed a series of dra-

matic skits on the theme of interpersonal problems between professionals. In 1985 we held a theater party at the Cleveland Play House to view and discuss the play *Billy Budd*, and two of the Play House actors shared their views of the moral choices facing the characters they played. But mostly we tried to bring together faculty members, students, and practicing professionals to exchange ideas and perspectives on questions of confidentiality, conflict of interest, lying, professional decision making—the whole range of issues that professionals have to engage in their various practices. We continue to believe that an illuminating cross-fertilization occurs when different professional groups compare and contrast their own situations with those of other professionals facing similar issues.

Where has the wider university fit into the center's programs?

First, deans and faculty members from every school in the university have assisted us directly through cash contributions, administrative largess, or full, rich participation in programs as panelists or audience. To name all the names would be impossible, but I must cite for her special generosity Dr. Mary Mahowald, one of the leading medical ethicists in the country. Mary was first an "outside speaker"



The Reverend Robert W. Clarke (standing) and Professor Robert P. Lawry (seated) are the co-founders and co-directors of Case Western Reserve University's Center for Professional Ethics. Clarke retired not long ago as director of the University Christian Movement, a campus-based Protestant ministry. Lawry, who holds the B.A. degree from Fordham University, the J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and the diploma in law from Oxford University, has been at the Law School since 1974, teaching such courses as Professional Responsibility and Ethics in the Professions.

for us; then, after she joined the faculty of the School of Medicine, she became an integral part of our Steering Committee and a speaker we turn to again and again to lead us through the latest medical maze or to keep us in touch with the larger philosophical tradition.

Second, students from every school have contributed generously to all of our undertakings and to the management of the center as well. Through the years, particularly in the Law School and the School of Nursing, student leaders have arisen to give sustained effort to myriad tasks. Of the many law students who have been distinguished leaders, I think particularly of Tom Wells, '81, who now practices law in New Jersey, and Mary Anne Fox, '83, now with the Federal Trade Commission in Washington, D.C. Tom was our first student co-chairman and the first to assume significant responsibilities. Mary Anne epitomized all that the CPE aspired to be; she was everywhere, into everything, leading, cajoling, wisecracking, pondering, asking the tough question, questing.

The third university connection came about through the good offices of colleagues at the School of Applied Social Sciences and the schools of Law, Medicine, and Nursing. For four years running we have been able to offer a unique interdisciplinary course called Ethics in the Professions. Here students and faculty members from the four schools come together to do in a fully developed academic setting what we do in small doses at our conferences and seminars: examine moral issues across professional lines.

Finally, special mention must be made of the recent legacy of CWRU's just departed president, David Ragone, and his wife, the effervescent Kit. Several years ago, President Ragone dipped into his discretionary fund and found some money for us—his way of offering encouragement and support for our efforts. We were grateful then, but we were overwhelmed by his parting gesture: the establishment of the David and Katherine Ragone Endowment Fund, which, in the words of the resolution establishing it, "shall be used to support educational and scholarly activities related to the study and practice of professional ethics, especially those activities organized by the Center for Professional Ethics." In his message to me announcing the establishment of the fund, Dave Ragone cited, as of particular value, the "unifying force" that the center has

begun to be within the university. We are proud of that evaluation, and resolute in our determination to strengthen the bonds that tie us together as a *university* rather than a collection of loosely affiliated, but separate, institutions.

The future is bright with promise. We are still working toward the goal of having a course in ethics taught in every school in Case Western Reserve University. I personally look forward to having an ethics colleague in every nook and cranny of the campus. Although I have simply assumed the value of ethics training for the purposes of this article, I could argue the value—and do argue it—with passion and conviction. No, I do not believe we change the souls of the students who pass through our doors. But the charge is to create an atmosphere, an environment, so that students realize deep in their professional bones that ethical decision making is part of every professional's (and every person's) normal life. Our first conference, on the Socialization of the Professional Student, exemplified the need and the problem. High on the agenda, too, is the establishment of a training program for those who want to teach ethics to professionals. That usually means teaching some philosophy to a dentist or some law to a philosopher. Harvard has just recently started such a program. We are not that far behind.

Officially the Center for Professional Ethics is a division of the university's Office of Student Affairs. This link has more than symbolic value, although it has that as being part of the one management center that is truly university-wide in scope. However, our connections are more substantive. The university's vice president for development, Tom Anderson, was dean of student affairs at the time the center was established. He was one of our first board members and has continued to be a source of support and advice. In his present capacity, Tom and his wondrous colleague Jim Conway enabled us to secure a major grant from the GAR Foundation and Mr. and Mrs. Leland Schubert in 1985, so that we could continue our educational tasks. Maureen Anderson, Tom's successor as dean of student affairs, was equally supportive and found the administrative strings to pluck to get us office space and official status. Our latest "boss," newly appointed

Dean Glenn Nicholls, has already proved to be a warm and talented colleague.

Our internal structure has changed quite a bit through the years. We began with a Steering Committee, composed of 20 to 25 students, faculty members, and practicing professionals. We added a smaller Executive Board (5 or 6) to handle more of the nitty-gritty. We also experimented with a large, diverse Advisory Board of 15 to 20 distinguished community and university representatives. In 1986 we became a membership organization, dropping the Steering and Advisory Committees and expanding the Executive Board to 12.

Although our titles change and our duties vary, Bob Clarke and I remain full partners in the enterprise. After 35 years of blessed service, Bob retired as director of the University Christian Movement in 1986. He also tried to retire as director of the center. I wouldn't let him. So, always co-founders, we are now called co-directors too, and—theoretically—Bob can take a fishing trip now and again. I have told him he can fish all he wants, as long as he comes back to us.

That shadow from our past, Ollie Schroeder, has retired from the Law School, but he keeps sending me clippings from the newspapers about the latest ethics scandal, whether on Wall Street or in the operating room or at the courthouse. "What are you going to do about this?" Schroeder scrawls on the clipping.

Me? I will phone Mary Mahowald. She will outline the several possible ways of approaching the problem. I will phone Wendy Rosett or Kate DeVito, current law student members of the center, who will volunteer to get the subject organized as one of our regular Monday evening dialogue-forums. I will phone Bob Clarke. I always phone Bob Clarke. "Don Ollie is riding again," I will say. Bob laughs. "Let's saddle the horses, then, partner. We've got work to do."

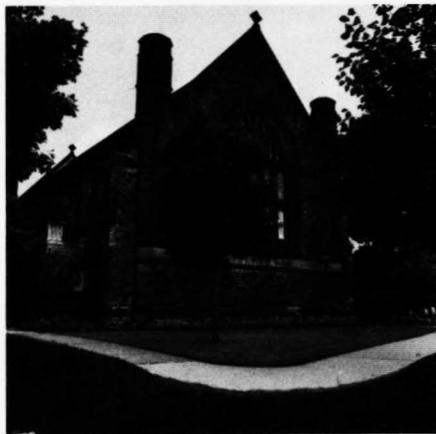
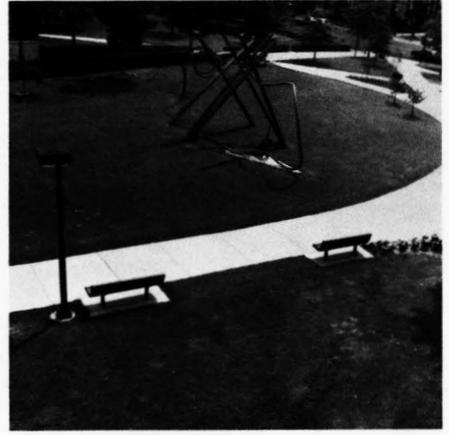
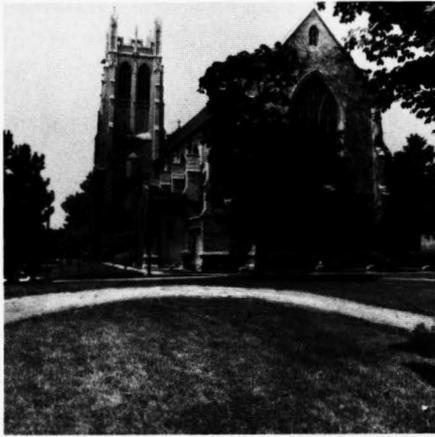
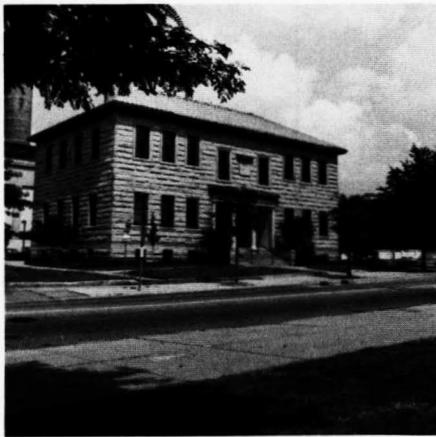
Interestingly, there is a small posse forming behind us now—doctors, nurses, dentists, lawyers, managers, social workers, engineers, pre-professionals, practitioners, deans, administrators. Who would have thought that an Ollie Schroeder tilt at a windmill would come to this?

in brief

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Cover

This issue of *In Brief* is about the Law School in its university context. Campus scenes include the old law building (now University Health Services) at top left, the new building at lower right, and—along the way—the Bingham Building, Amasa Stone Chapel, Thwing Center, and the Michelson-Morley fountain in the Case Quad.

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