

Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology

Volume 68
Issue 2 *June*

Article 4

Summer 1977

Fred E. Inbau

James R. Thompson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc>

 Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), and the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

James R. Thompson, Fred E. Inbau, 68 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 180 (1977)

This Criminal Law is brought to you for free and open access by Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology by an authorized editor of Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

FRED E. INBAU

JAMES R. THOMPSON*

"A teacher affects infinity; he can never tell when his influence stops."

Henry Adams

Drafting a suitable tribute to a man and his achievements is always a difficult task. That is especially true when the author and subject have shared a close and warm personal relationship, which began as teacher-student and eventually graduated to teacher-colleague (and still student!).

The task becomes even more difficult when the achievements in question are not only prodigious, but show no sign of abating in either quantity or quality with the passing years. An up-to-date laundry list of academic and professional laurels is not only inadequate to the occasion, but also risks instant obsolescence.

Nevertheless this is 1977. And my beloved teacher, colleague, and friend Fred Inbau is retiring from the faculty at the Northwestern University School of Law.

Trying to imagine my alma mater without Fred is like trying to imagine Chicago without Lake Michigan: it just cannot be done. It is inconceivable, of course, that he will be retiring from the teaching of law, and the sharing of his wisdom, acquired over years of study, practice and experience. But as that teaching and that sharing become less formal and less mandatory, a tribute to those years is in order. And although I sometimes have to grope for the right words, the feelings behind them come to me loud and strong.

The quote at the beginning of this piece could probably be applied, for better or for worse, to nearly any teacher of any subject. Certainly, there have been few teachers in any field of whom it was more thoroughly and happily true than of Fred. Generations (he would be embarrassed for us to count how many) of judges, legislators, prosecutors, defense lawyers, editors and police have passed through his shop and carry the stamp of his legal training. I suspect that not one of his stu-

dents remained unchanged by this extraordinary man and his exceptional talent.

Of course, Fred also has some exceptional biases. We all do—even those of us in such non-controversial professions as politics. I have never met a neutral professor in any field, and certainly not in an area which arouses the passion and debate of criminal jurisprudence. And yet Fred's biases were always put to good use—illuminating the subject at hand just as clearly for those who disagreed with his conclusions as for those who agreed.

What is more, his opinions never interfered with the academic freedom of either his students or his colleagues. He taught future defense lawyers with the same vigor that he taught future prosecutors—and with the same terrible jokes.

Never content with presenting a casebook education, Fred consistently encouraged his students to develop practical legal experience and apply it to their studies. In that regard, his methods followed the dictum of Elbert Hubbard who said, "It is not book learning that young men need, nor instruction about this or that, but a stiffening of the vertebrae which will cause them to be loyal to a trust, to act promptly, concentrate their energies, (and) do a thing."

I must confess that my own vertebrae were stiffened by Fred's rigid standards on numerous occasions, even if as a student I sometimes felt the unpleasantness slightly lower in the anatomy. He was a tough man to satisfy, and that is what made satisfying him so damned worthwhile.

As a scholar, Fred was productive, perceptive and unbelievably wide-ranging in subject matter. From the polygraph technique to industrial security to constitutional law to statute drafting, he never failed to set new standards, even as he never shied away from challenging old ones. Furthermore, his guidance and encouragement of serious scholarship in others never failed to draw out the best work in the people around him.

* Governor of Illinois.

Outside the classroom, Fred manifested the same unashamed love for the law and the same concern for its application to improve the human condition. As a community activist, he was one of the founding fathers of the National District Attorneys Association and of Americans for Effective Law Enforcement. He always brought that perspective back into the classroom with innovative programs ranging from the police legal advisor to the criminal defense litigation unit to the very publication in which this tribute is written.

But even more than being a first rate teacher and legal mind, Fred is also a first rate human

being—a person whose uncompromising integrity and unwavering adherence to strict professional standards are a constant source of inspiration.

In the words of John Greenleaf Whittier:

Such was our friend. Formed on the good old plan. A true and brave and downright honest man.

Such *is* our friend Fred Inbau, and I take great pleasure in thanking him for the indelible mark he left on my life and for his continued good counsel and friendship in the many years ahead.