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## Personal Remembrance of William Hughes Mulligan

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## Personal Remembrance of William Hughes Mulligan

### Cover Page Footnote

Dean, Fordham University School of Law, 1981-2002

## A PERSONAL REMEMBRANCE OF WILLIAM HUGHES MULLIGAN

*John D. Feerick\**

Bill Mulligan was a presence in my life for more than forty years—a dim presence when, as a teenager, I first heard his name at Fordham College in Dr. William Frasca's government classes; a towering presence after I became a student of his at Fordham Law School; and then an inspiring presence as I made my way as a practicing lawyer and then a successor to the office he graced and distinguished at Fordham Law School. Dean Mulligan was a master builder of Fordham Law School, as everyone knows. But what everyone may not know is the extraordinary influence he had on the students he taught and the thousands of graduates whose diplomas carry his name. He was a lawyer par excellence—perhaps the best there was in bringing joy to others through the medium of humor. I commented elsewhere that he was my hero, representing all that was good and possible as a human being.<sup>1</sup>

Bill is now gone, but he will never be forgotten by those who knew him, and the legacy he left behind will be an enduring and treasured memorial to his greatness as a person, lawyer, teacher, and Dean. My own feelings about his impact were expressed in the eulogy I was privileged to deliver at the Mass celebrating his life:<sup>2</sup>

Rosie, Anne, Bill, Steve, Mary Liz, Michael, Jenny, Maura, Billy, Kate and Rory:

There is so much each of us would like to say to you—so many personal memories of Bill we would like to share with you, as his former students, as faculty members and graduates of Fordham Law School, as colleagues from the Judiciary, as former partners and associates, as just friends and admirers. But we know that this is not an occasion for extended remarks. Let me just say that your Bill was our Bill, a towering, gentle and loving presence in our lives whose great mind was only exceeded by his great heart. It was such a joy to know him and be with him. He drew all of us into his orbit instantaneously.

For Fordham Law School students and graduates, he was our Dean, our hero, our role model, our mentor and guide—our prince among men. He taught us the law in the classroom, pointed the way to how we should conduct ourselves as lawyers, and brought great honor to our School and the legal profession of which we aspired to be a part. He cared deeply for all of us, helping us cope with the

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\* Dean, Fordham University School of Law, 1981 to Present.

1. John D. Feerick, *Remarks Delivered on the Occasion of the Presentation of the Fordham-Stein Award to the Honorable William Hughes Mulligan*, 59 *Fordham L. Rev.* 479, 483 (1991).

2. May 17, 1996, at St. Joseph's Church, Bronxville, New York.

cost of a legal education, moving around our resumes, building us up, and when things became difficult, lightening our burden by sharing his wisdom and the magic of his wit and humor. How can I ever forget the nice things he said about me when I first met my wife at a Moot Court program at Fordham Law School in March of 1960, or the respect I inherited as a Fordham Law graduate because I came from Bill Mulligan's school.

Bill walked on the stage with presidents, governors, cardinals, bishops, and the most famous of Americans, but you would never know that from anything he said in his conversations with you. He treated each of us as an equal, as a next-door neighbor. There was a warmth and basic decency about him—never hurting, condemning, condescending, calling attention to himself, or seeking his own advantage and advancement. There also was a special quality about him—a sparkle in his eye, a turn of phrase or other expression that uplifted every occasion. I remember inquiring of him, when he left the bench and entered law practice, how he wished people to address him—as Dean, Judge, Mr., or just Bill. Without hesitating, he said, “Just call me ‘Your Worship.’”

It is a privilege beyond privilege for me to occupy an office that Bill Mulligan graced as Dean of Fordham Law School. It is still Bill Mulligan's office and it always will be.

As I think of Bill Mulligan today, many thoughts rush through my mind—of the great love he had for his beloved Rosie and their family, of the joy he received from them, and of the tremendous admiration, almost adulation, of his students, colleagues, and friends.

The wonderful magic and merriment of the Bill Mulligan we have known will live on in all of our lives—in all of our tellings and stories about him and in our affectionate remembrances of him. Each of us has taken a part of Bill and made it a part of ourselves.

When I last saw Bill at home, we laughed together upon discovering that the one sport we both excelled in, as boys growing up in the Bronx, was stick-ball. When I visited him last Saturday, all I could think of was how much he gave of himself to us on every occasion and in every possible way, and how much we took and received from him. We could never get enough of him.

Well, Bill, today is your day—a day on which we pray for you, a day we thank God for your presence among us, and a day we let you know how much you have meant to us.

Rosie, I mentioned to you a trip I made to Ireland and a poster my wife and I had purchased because it reminded us of Bill. It contains a poem called *The Fiddler of Dooney* by William Butler Yeats. I would like to give you that poster and read the poem.

*The Fiddler of Dooney*

When I play on my fiddle in Dooney,  
Folk dance like a wave of the sea;  
My cousin is priest in Kilvarnet,  
My brother in Mohanabuiee.

I passed my brother and cousin:  
 They read in their books of prayer;  
 I read in my book of songs  
 I bought at the Sligo fair.

When we come at the end of time,  
 To Peter sitting in state,  
 He will smile on three old spirits,  
 But call me first through the gates;

For the good are always the merry  
 Saved by an evil chance,  
 And the merry love the fiddle.  
 And the merry love to dance.

And when the folk there spy me.  
 They will all come up to me.  
 With "Here is the fiddler of Dooney!"  
 And dance like a wave of the sea.

Last night, I asked Rory, the youngest of Bill's six grandchildren, what he remembered most about his grandfather. Rory said, "He made me laugh." He made us all laugh, Rory, and we love him so.

I conclude by sharing with you a verse composed by my wife entitled, *Remembering Bill Mulligan*.

When I smile and my eyes start to twinkle  
 You know there's a thought in my mind  
 'Tis a thought that will make you all chuckle  
 For it's one of the Mulligan kind

It's a thought where the parts fit together  
 In a sort of preposterous way  
 When I say it aloud it will make you  
 Feel jolly and happy and gay

For life is a mixture of blessings  
 With sorrows and joys large and small  
 And when I put on my ROSE glasses  
 I just want to laugh at it all

For when life is a vision of color  
 A garden is made of this earth  
 And when people can laugh at their troubles  
 They find they're united in mirth

So remember me telling my stories  
 That lifted your spirits like leaven  
 And if you can find solace in laughter  
 I'm sure you'll have one foot in Heaven.

Farewell for now, Bill. "May we merrily meet in Heaven."

