

A Little Touch of Harry*

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I had occasion to make on March 6, 1975, the following remarks about Harry Kalven, Jr.

This series of six weekly law lectures here at Rosary College, of which my talk tonight [“The Trial of Sir Thomas More”] is the conclusion, has been dedicated to the memory of Harry Kalven, Jr., Professor of Law at The University of Chicago and a friend of this college. Mr. Kalven, who died last October, was to have given one of the lectures in this series.

Dr. Lawrence Freedman opened the inaugural lecture of this series by likening Harry Kalven to a jeweler, a craftsman who would hold people and arguments up to the light to bring out the best in them. And when he found a gem of quality—a man or woman, an argument, a turn of phrase—he would treasure it.

Among the jewels he treasured—and in this, as in several other ways, he was like Thomas More, another man of sweetness and wit, serious about his civic duties and born for friendship—among the jewels Harry Kalven treasured was his family. In assessing many men of talent and distinction, the less said of their wives, the better—especially if those wives are themselves so talented or so independent-minded as to be inclined to resent their husbands’ accomplishments. But in his wife, a quite talented woman in her own right, Harry Kalven found a jewel, a companion of many years who patiently listened to his always youthful speculations, who took pride in his triumphs, and who loyally ministered to him in his afflictions. They enjoyed a companionship which could instruct their friends (as Thomas More’s life instructed *his* friends) in the satisfactions of a good marriage. It is reassuring, at a time when women are desperately trying to “define their roles,” to be able to treasure the memory of the fruitful life Betty Kalven shared with her husband.

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The death, and even more the premature death, of such a man as Harry Kalven affects, and affects deeply, all who had come to know and to depend upon him. But his many writings and the generations of students he helped shape do remain—as do, in the hearts of those close to him, the generous appraisals which he had made of them and which leave them forever enriched.

Harry Kalven lives on in this form more surely, more vitally, than it is ever given most men to live at all. I am reminded, in thus recalling him and the heartening influence he exercised in many crises, of the description in Shakespeare's *Henry V* of the young king walking among the outnumbered English soldiers in France the night before the fateful Battle of Agincourt:

. . . O, now, who will behold
 The royal captain of this ruin'd band
 Walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent,
 Let him cry 'Praise and glory on his head!'
 For forth he goes and visits all his host,
 Bids them good morrow with a modest smile
 And calls them brothers, friends, and countrymen.
 Upon his royal face there is no note
 How dread an army hath enrounded him;
 Nor doth he dedicate one jot of color
 Unto the weary and all-watched night,
 But freshly looks, and overbears attaint
 With cheerful semblance and sweet majesty;
 That every wretch, pining and pale before,
 Beholding him, plucks comfort from his looks.
 A largess universal, like the sun,
 His liberal eye doth give to every one,
 Thawing cold fear; that mean and gentle all
 Behold, as may unworthiness define,
 A little touch of Harry in the night.¹

¹ Act IV, prologue, lines 28-47.