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Arkansas Law Review's 75th Anniversary Remarks

**University of Arkansas School of Law
Fayetteville, Arkansas
March 2022**

Steve Caple*

It is an exciting time for the *Arkansas Law Review*, the School of Law, and the University of Arkansas. The journal is celebrating its 75th anniversary, the law school is approaching its 100th year of existence, and the university recently celebrated its 150th birthday.

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge that we are in the midst of Women's History Month, and the law school recently named its fourth consecutive female leader, Dean Alena Allen. Congratulations. Dean Cynthia Nance started that trend in 2006, and I am delighted that she is here today.

As for the *Arkansas Law Review*, it is especially close to my heart.¹ When I was a law student, I somehow pulled the wool over the eyes of the prior editorial board and was afforded the opportunity to help produce the journal.² That experience brought with it all of the things that you might expect—it instilled discipline, it improved my editing and writing abilities, it expanded my appreciation for research and scholarship, and it furthered my love of history and the law. However, it also brought with it something that I did not expect—a shared experience that fostered lifetime friendships. To this day, some

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1. Tracey and Steve Caple recently provided a generous gift to the University of Arkansas School of Law to renovate the *Arkansas Law Review* office space.

2. Steve Caple served as the Managing Editor for the *Arkansas Law Review* from 1992 to 1993.

of my closest friends are former classmates from the editorial board.

As I was preparing my remarks for today, I re-read Allen W. Bird II's work, *The History of the Arkansas Law Review*, which was included in the celebration of the journal's 50th anniversary in 1997.³ For those who support this institution, I highly recommend reading it. Mr. Bird's article led me to several other works, which collectively serve as a reminder of the debt of gratitude we owe to Dean Robert A. Leflar, not only for his role in legal education and the law school, but also his commitment to the law review.⁴

I had the good fortune of meeting Dean Leflar. Although his reputation preceded him, I did not fully appreciate his contributions to the *Arkansas Law Review* while I was a student in Fayetteville. To this day, he still holds the record for the most works contributed to the journal, at 38.⁵ Many others have contributed to the law review, and some of those authors may surprise you. The journal has published pieces with a wide range of perspectives, from John F. Kennedy⁶ to Antonin Scalia⁷ to Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.,⁸ just to name a few.

The evolution of the *Arkansas Law Review* over the years is impressive. When it began in 1947, it was a practical publication to address the issues that Arkansas lawyers faced in their day-to-day legal practices. By the 1990s, the journal had cultivated a more theoretical dimension. Dean Leonard Strickman noted in 1994 that the law review should have national relevance.⁹ The journal has certainly fulfilled that objective today, with its works

3. 50 ARK. L. REV. 5 (1997).

4. Dean Robert A. Leflar served as the law school dean from 1943 to 1954. His commitment to the *Arkansas Law Review* is widely commemorated. See e.g., Warren E. Burger, *Leflar Testimonial*, 25 ARK. L. REV. 1 (1971); Roger J. Traynor, *The Sterling Leflar of Arkansas*, 25 ARK. L. REV. 3 (1971); J. William Fulbright, *Tribute to Robert A. Leflar*, 25 ARK. L. REV. 70 (1971); Joe C. Barrett, *Vignette of Robert A. Leflar*, 25 ARK. L. REV. 143 (1971); Richard B. McCulloch, *The Founder of the Arkansas Law Review*, 25 ARK. L. REV. 154 (1971).

5. All research on file with the *Arkansas Law Review*.

6. John F. Kennedy, *The World Around Us*, 11 ARK. L. REV. 288 (1957).

7. Antonin Scalia, *A Tribute to Chief Judge Richard Arnold*, 58 ARK. L. REV. 541 (2005).

8. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Harrison Bergeron*, 44 ARK. L. REV. 927 (1991).

9. See Bird, *supra* note 3, at 21.

having now been cited by the United States Supreme Court and every United States Circuit Court of Appeals, other than the Federal Circuit.

I think we can all agree that the law review has an extraordinarily rich history, and it has accomplished much in its first 75 years. I am not sure if I will be around to see how much more it has achieved 75 years from now, but I am looking forward to celebrating its 100th anniversary.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who supports the *Arkansas Law Review*. Among others, that list includes the people in this room, the members and editorial board of the journal, the professors, administrators, and staff of the law school and the university, the bar membership and judiciary of this great state, and those who appreciate good legal scholarship throughout the country. Finally, I would like to specifically thank Erron and Libby Smith for establishing the Arkansas Law Review Endowment, which will take the support for the journal to a whole new level.

It is an honor to be with you today.

Erron Smith*

As we assemble today to celebrate the *Arkansas Law Review* and the Arkansas Law Review Academy, I would like to start by expressing some gratitude. First, thank you, Steve Caple, for your generosity to the law school and the law review—and for a reminder of our law review’s proud history. And thank you to the law school administration and the current editorial board for making today possible. It is great to see you all here today; I see some friends I have known for years, and I see the faces of many I hope will become friends for years to come.

* Erron Smith is the Corporate Secretary and Associate General Counsel of Walton Enterprises in Bentonville, Arkansas. Mr. Smith earned his B.A. in Political Science and Journalism, with a French minor, from the University of Arkansas in 1999. He later earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Arkansas School of Law in 2002, where he graduated first in his class and served as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Arkansas Law Review* from 2001-2002. He currently serves on the Arkansas Bar Association’s Legal-Related Education Super-Committee and Law School Sub-Committee.

Those of us who have served on the editorial board know that in addition to being a great academic and scholarly honor, being a law review editor is a tremendous amount of work. Consistently producing quality content would not be possible without the support of a number of people: our distinguished faculty who provide the members of the board with hours of advice and guidance, while respecting the editorial board's independence; the law school staff who, in often unheralded ways, provide the law review with the tools that make the publication of an issue feasible; and the members of our alumni community and the Arkansas Bar Association, who generously give their time and resources to empower the editorial board to make the *Arkansas Law Review* an integral part of the Arkansas legal community.

I am, indeed, proud of the role the *Arkansas Law Review* has established over the last 75 years. Not only does the law review publish scholarship on pressing domestic and international issues, generate intriguing intellectual discussions on some of the most interesting and provocative legal topics of the day, and provide practical assistance to members of the legal community, but it also contributes to furthering the mission of the University of Arkansas by leveraging research, discovery, and creative activity to help develop solutions to the challenges we face in this State and in our nation.

I know that all of us as former members of the *Arkansas Law Review* editorial board are honored to be a part of its rich history. For me personally, my experience as Editor-in-Chief of the law review from 2001 to 2002 has proven invaluable in my journey as a lawyer, as a writer, as a leader, and as a person. Among other things, my term as Editor-in-Chief gave me an opportunity to practice one of the most difficult tasks in the legal profession: good writing in the face of often unreasonable deadlines and high expectations. It taught me about the challenges of leading a diverse team of talented women and men who work tirelessly in the pursuit of a common goal but who can inevitably find themselves in conflict; and it taught me about the challenges and importance of owning the consequences—sometimes publicly—of the decisions that leaders make.

In establishing the Arkansas Law Review Endowment and through subsequent membership in the Arkansas Law Review Academy¹⁰, my wife Libby and I hoped our contribution might encourage other alumni who have benefited from their law review experience and who care deeply about the law review, the law school, and the Arkansas legal community—and their respective missions—to join us in supporting future editorial boards by providing the resources they need to make the *Arkansas Law Review* one of the most respected and useful law journals in the country.

Now, upon the 75th anniversary of the law review, I look back on the reflections of Dean Robert A. Leflar—the person most responsible for the establishment of the law review—upon the law review’s 50th anniversary. On that occasion, Dean Leflar reminded us that a good law school needs a good law review. And he expressed pride in the work of the past editors of the law review during its first half-century of existence, especially to the extent that they advanced the law itself.

I am pleased to see where the law review is today on its 75th anniversary. I am even more excited to see where the law review will be as it reaches its centennial. Through support of the law review endowment and this Arkansas Law Review Academy, I have no doubt that we will all play a role in continuing to advance the law—and that when we reach that 100th year, this law review will continue to make us, and Dean Leflar, proud.

10. Libby and Erron Smith established the endowment in late 2019 to fully fund the general operations of the law review and to provide current members with law review alumni readily available to answer questions and consult as needed.