

**Michael Taggart – student,
Emeritus Professor Brian Coote**

Michael Bruce Taggart was the most enthusiastic student I ever had (some might say “the only”!). A large, beefy, rugby-playing type, exuding energy, he was physically not at all the stereotypical nerd. But I never did observe the sweaty T-shirts. So, might it possibly have been the sight of Nin in the front row of his classroom which brought on the perspiration, understandably enough! What, for me, distinguished him from other students were his absolute passion for the law, and his pursuit of excellence both of which were to last him for the rest of his career.

He did not take his second year Contract course with me. (Had he done so, he would, *of course*, have felt less hesitant about teaching it himself – with or without Nin in the front row of the lecture theatre!). The classes he did take with me were two LLB (Hons) seminars for the meetings of which, to my great delight, he would have read more widely than I had myself. Not surprisingly, some of this boundless enthusiasm for the law had an inspirational effect on the other members of the two groups, almost all of whom went on to take postgraduate courses at leading overseas law schools.

My other main contact with him was as supervisor of his Honours dissertation. His topic was some recent English legislation, which had recast (I won’t say necessarily ‘reformed’) the law relating to exception clauses. That seemed to justify a new edition of my own book on such clauses and it was arranged between us that, as well as writing the dissertation, he would subsequently join me as joint author of the new edition. In the event, for a number of reasons at the English end, the new edition was never written. But the dissertation did, at least, score an A+ grade towards his degree.

I was asked to confine myself to my experience of Mike as a student but I can’t help mentioning that it was he who initiated production of the history of the Law School which I, with others, recently wrote to mark its 125th anniversary. He took a continuing interest in its progress, even in his illness, reading each chapter as it was written.

One of Mike’s great friends, and his closest rival for top student of his year, was Ron Paterson who, after a stint teaching in North America and then at this Law School, went on to become the New Zealand Health and Disability Commissioner. It seems to me rather a nice touch that Ron should recently have been appointed to the Chair left vacant by his old friend and academic rival.

In a reference I provided for Mike at the end of his LLB (Hons) course, I concluded by saying “I have the highest regard for him both as a student and as a man. One cannot say better than that.” That remained how I saw him, for the rest of his life.

ARTICLES