

## CHARLIE CANTRELL: THE BEST SONG EVER

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It is not as common as it once was for law professors to spend their entire career at one institution. Colleagues at other schools often ask why anyone would want to stay at one place for so long. You do not get too far into the conversation before you find out that people elsewhere often do not feel the same way about their colleagues the way we do here. At this place, we did not form good working relationships—we became friends.

How do you make friends of new colleagues? It is not as easy as it sounds. Most of us like to do our own thing, and it is easy for senior colleagues to justify treating new hires with seemingly benign indifference. If you need something, let me know—good luck!

Charlie Cantrell was a much better colleague—and man—than that. He did not wait for you to ask for help; he offered and delivered. Charlie's transparent generosity left no doubt that you were not on your own—your colleagues would step up for you. When I began teaching Constitutional Law, a subject he had long mastered, Charlie regularly asked me how I was doing and (always off-handedly) offered invariably sound advice about how to handle one tricky situation or another.

He was also generous in what he did not say. For many years, we used the same textbook, but Charlie would cover the material so much faster that in his class, by the end of the year, you would read about a third more. I am sure he wondered what I could possibly be doing with all that class time, but he never said a word.

Charlie also took the time to find out what moved you besides law. When he found out that we are both passionate Bruce Springsteen fans,<sup>1</sup>

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1. It must be noted, however, as anyone who has ever discussed music with him can tell you, that Charlie cares and knows as much about many great artists as he does about Bruce.

it led to years and years of great conversation about Bruce and his band. But our Springsteen connection opened a window that allowed me to experience the full nature of Charlie's extraordinary generosity. When, after many years off the road, Springsteen decided to reunite the E Street Band and to tour again, I was excited to get tickets to a Dallas show, and I told Charlie about it. A few weeks later, I found a CD case in my mailbox. I opened the case and was stunned to find a homemade recording of the concert I had just attended. (Charlie's music acquisition and distribution capabilities are incomparable.) Thanks to Charlie, the concert will never become a faded memory; I can experience it over and over.

For the next decade, the gifts in my mailbox would continue. If I even just mentioned that I wished I had seen a particular show, Charlie would strike again. When, for the first time in decades, Springsteen played in Oklahoma, Charlie, without a word from me, delivered the recording. It isn't about just having the music. My children were too young at the time to go to a concert with me. The band's great saxophonist, Clarence Clemons, has since passed away—my kids will never get to see "the Boss's" band as it truly was. But because of Charlie, I can play the concert for them and tell them their parents were there.

I can also tell them how fortunate I was to have a colleague as generous as Charlie. It was not the CDs, as cool as they are, that really mattered to me. What mattered to me, and always will, is that when Charlie discovered that we loved something in common, he thought enough of me to invite me to experience a bit of that passion with him. Everything is more fun when you enjoy it with friends.