

Rest in peace John Dugan Barr.

As I sent my mailing out last week I got a return saying that John Dugan Barr, one of the recipients, had passed away. If I needed to make contact with the law firm, please contact his partner.

Dugan was an outsized character whom I had known since college. Our paths intertwined in several ways, none of them academic.

Reading a biography is always cause for reflection. It raises questions of what one might have done with one's own life, and the ways in which ability, circumstance and personality intertwine to determine the arc of one's life history. Dugan and I knew each other at the beginning of our lives. His followed a quite predictable path, mine did not whatsoever. At the same time I mourn his passing, I am contemplating how to raise my own two late life children. There are lessons to be taken from Dugan's example.

He and I met as incoming freshman at Reed College in the fall of 1960. There was a one week camp prior to school at Spirit Lake, in the shadow of Mount Saint Helens, which was to erupt spectacularly twenty years later. Dugan immediately established himself as a person to be reckoned with. He was big, handsome, gregarious, witty and talented with the guitar. The self-confidence he exuded acted as a magnifier for each of those attributes.

The guitar was everywhere. He had a great personality for performing. I remember parts of his repertoire. Ghost Riders in the Sky was right up there, as was Seven Old Ladies Locked In The Lavatory. He was a master of the somewhat off-color joke or image, such as describing a musical instrument called the upright boneophone or a lady's vertical smile.

Dugan came from an established family in Yreka California. His father, J Everett Barr, was Superior Court judge for the County of Siskiyou – a big man in town. He was a big man in every dimension, standing about 6'7" and a friend to all. Dugan's mother Edna was a competent woman, apparently content to stand behind the man of so many sterling qualities.

Dugan like to tell tales of his father. In one instance the judge ruled in favor of plaintiff who had bought a pizza business and found there was no license to sell beer. His honor proclaimed that you cannot eat pizza without washing it down with something.

Dugan never lacked for women to whom to pay attention. He and my friend Angele Wilking were something of an item for a few months during our freshman year, though she found his overt masculinity to be a little bit wearing. The summer after our freshman year he invited me to stay with his family in Yreka California. I forget how it worked, but there was an auto body shop/auto wrecker acquaintance who offered me a job polishing used cars. It was the first serious work I had done in my life. Around meals I imbibed of the judge's wisdom. He opined that some people had "the acquisitive instinct," a desire

to own things which had never affected him. The community respected him greatly – I find that the local courthouse is named after him.

I would say that Dugan also lacked the acquisitive instinct. He simply didn't need it – things came to him automatically. He was a generous soul because the Lord had given him a lot. He built a reasonably sized law firm in Redding California, one which supported him financially and established him in the community, and he simply didn't want more than that. Other lawyers would have had interests in shopping centers, apartment buildings and the like because they could acquire them. If Dugan had such interests he never mentioned them. He was more interested in people.

The next year in school I had a serious crush on a freshman named Candy Cudlip. I was a jejune and inept suitor and was never able to consummate the deal – a fellow I hardly knew named Bob Kreiss came in from nowhere and did so. But as Willie Nelson says of the women who have come in and out life's doors, we learn from all of them. I learned something of courtship in my failure to win Candy. I also should have learned something about women. This was a woman who rather coldly ground out a cigarette in my left arm as I grinned and bore it. A wiser man would have decided at that point that this was not an ideal life partner. The burn scar lasted a couple of months.

The following year I was successful in romancing an attractive young freshman, Joanne Leslie. However, I was not doing so well academically. I dropped out of college in December 1962.

There is certainly a life's lesson to be drawn from comparing Dugan and my lives at this point. He knew what he wanted to do – follow in his father's footsteps. Thus, he knew why he was in college. To get a degree which would gain him admission into a good law school. I had no goal in life to focus my attention. I felt guilty letting my parents spend scarce money on education the point of which I did not understand. In retrospect I am fortunate to have dropped out.

By the summer of 1963 I was living in an apartment at 6448 Colby Street in Oakland, right on the Berkeley border. I invited Dugan to join me for the summer. We had some good times, going to the Monkey Inn for beer. We got to know the girls downstairs, one of whom had been my high school girlfriend Sue West. We talked a lot about philosophy and the things that young men approaching 21 will do. Being poor students, we made homebrew beer in the closet.

I remember one of our conversations quite distinctly. I told Dugan that I thought that homosexuality was a fairly normal thing, and that I imagined I could understand the mutual attraction that might exist between men. I had grown up in San Francisco around gays. He was from a small town in Northern California and had a different point of view. He looked at me funny and crossed his legs tight. I am sure that things changed over the years – he would have been a doctrinaire Democrat, whereas I look askance at gay-rights parades and gay proselytizing under the rubric of sex education.

I talked to Dugan about my inamorata. My first crush. The aforementioned Candy Cudlip. She was attractive, tall and slender. I guess that I built her up in Dugan's eyes because he was the one who returned to Reed College after I had dropped out and he eventually married her.

The last Candy episode in my life occurred after I had dropped out. Stan Washburn, a fellow dropout, wanted to borrow my BMW motorcycle for a weekend trip to Portland. Madness! I told him it would only work if I came along. Double madness! During that weekend I somehow wound up with a totally drunken Candy in my arms who wanted to take things all the way. Inasmuch as I was still somewhat committed to Joanne, and I was taken aback by her being so forward, I did not take her up.

In retrospect, this was all the better for me. I don't know how long they remained married; they had no children. She married again, a fellow named Bill Camp. Make that Big Bill Camp, very prominent in the Democratic Party in Sacramento, a labor organizer and a smart political operator. They had one son Bayliss. He is a popular professor at Sacramento State. He is also a very open advocate of gay rights. Candy champions everything liberal, whereas even in college, I was somewhat conservative. I don't think she was terribly keen on children. I remember telling her of my proclivities – to populate the world with blue-eyed babies. She smiled wryly and evidenced no such desire itself.

It is a credit to Dugan that he remained on good terms with almost everybody who passed through his life. His ex-wife and her son Bayliss have some nice things to say about him.

Dugan was a very extroverted man. He wanted to get to know everybody. This has its good and its bad sides. It's a good attribute as a lawyer because the people in the courtroom liked him. They win cases on the strength of being liked. That's what being a lawyer is about.

He was a big man in girth as well as height – I would guess somewhere between 250 and 300 pounds, probably varying quite a bit. One of the problems psychologists associate with extroversion is a tendency to overindulge in all things, including food. Dugan's obituary didn't say of what he died, but it would not surprise me if it was something related to food and drink. Probably diabetes or heart problems. He hinted broadly at familiarity with philandering, though he coyly never gave any details. I'm sure it was there for him if he wanted it.

Dugan had five children. Son Ben Barr, and daughters, Karen, Erin, and Kathleen. A fifth child, Jenny died a while ago. Two of the daughters worked with him in his law firm. This is quite a testimony to his character. This is an era in which are a lot of children disavow their parents. Dugan's daughters obviously appreciated their father.

Dugan's daughters presumably supported his causes. As a lifelong Democrat he would've championed immigrants and the underdog in general. He was passionate about his law cases. Last time I saw him, in 2004, he was telling me about a Korean

American heart surgeon who rather heartlessly led his patients to believe they needed surgery when they didn't. So he would perform expensive, unnecessary surgeries in order to take a advantage of the rich insurance payments available. Apparently the surgeries had not worked out well for one particular patient and Dugan took the case. He received pretty good remuneration, and had the good feeling of fighting on the side of the angels.

I have worked alongside, attended church and served on boards with a number of lawyers. One of their hallmarks is that they are always absolutely convinced of the rightness of the cases that they take and want to convince you as well.

I saw something of the contradictions inherent in his life through photos of one of his daughter's weddings. It was a beautiful country club affair, a number of beautiful maids of honor and handsome groom and best man, all very upper-class looking white people. Even though Dugan may have been a Democrat by politics, he was an elitist white man by the way he lived. More power to him for that. He didn't let his politics get in the way of the lifestyle brought by charm, intelligence, and hard work.

It's interesting how our lives paralleled each other. First we had the college experience. He and I both married a second time about 1981, as we approached our forties. His marriage lasted until his death, mine lasted only 25 years. Both of us have had five children – I by two wives, he by one (I think). Both of us have been pretty successful, even in comparison with our well educated, intelligent classmates. Of the people who attended college at the same time, I think of only three who attained some minor degree of fame: Rich Danzig, assistant secretary of the Navy; John Westling, president of some college; and Barrett Hansen, a DJ called Dr. Demento.

There were big differences. Whereas Dugan had a sense of his station in life from birth, my family was not as wealthy, certainly not recognized for much of anything and so I did not have the benefit of being somebody as I came of age. Dugan was able to make the most of his intellectual talents early on .

One of his virtues is that he was honest with himself. He told me that his school IQ was about 130. 130 is not bad. It's one person and 40 or so, and combine that with a good work ethic, a charming nature and a rather exceptional height and the size and you got a powerful combination which served him well all of his life.

As for me, I knew that I was smarter than the average kid, but it didn't translate into much of anything until well into my thirties when I found that there were indeed things I could do that other people could not.

He, an established lawyer, was better positioned to enter a second marriage. I'm sure he had his choice of partners, whereas I waited several years just to find one who would say yes to the proposition of marriage and children. The results were predictable. His marriage worked and produced successful children. Mine was zero for three in turning out functioning adults. One might say that I eventually outgrew the marriage.

Is this important? I'm still raising a family. I need to note what works. I think that I am giving my family a platform from which to launch. I cannot change their innate abilities. Those are fixed at birth. But I can give them an opportunity to use their talents, to develop them. What I did not have in my own life, was strong encouragement to overcome my natural laziness and develop my talents. For this reason I want to encourage the children to write and to do things that help other people to solve real-world problems – that's how you succeed in life. In particular, you don't just blindly go through the University in the hopes that they'll be something waiting for you on the other end.

I believe that Dugan's seed should prosper. He had the kind of material that will improve the human species. As a liberal, he would've argued that I'm wrong. Every human being on earth should have an equal right to procreate. More than that, he would argue that people like himself and me should support the others financially; we are selfish if we don't. Thus the great argument between conservatives and liberals.

Dugan knew who he was and never rose above himself. It is almost certain that the Democratic Party tried to recruit him to run for office. He obviously preferred to be exactly where he was – a fairly big deal in fairly provincial Redding California. He was active in local charities – probably had a hard time saying no.

His is an example of a life well lived. I still have some runway left and I hope I do as well. And, to the extent possible, apply the lessons of Dugan's life in raising my own family.