

## THE ENTERTAINING PETER HENNING

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I first met Peter Henning in the fall of 1983. I was a second-year student at Georgetown Law improbably charged with teaching legal research and writing to a class of first-year students, including Peter. He stood out not just because he was bright—many of my students were, although none quite as brilliant—but because he was really, really funny. He was also an excellent writer from the start. In later years, as he published articles and books, he would say that I taught him everything he knew about legal writing, which we both knew was ridiculous.

We followed the same path for a few years. We both served on the *Georgetown Law Journal*, and he entertained me with ribald nicknames for the self-important editorial board members who gave him assignments. Immediately after law school, I clerked for Judge Murray M. Schwartz in the District of Delaware, and Peter clerked for the same judge two years later. Peter would delight in comparing notes about life with our judge, who took him to the same places for lunch and told him the same stories.

We fell out of touch for several years and then reconnected about fifteen years ago when I contacted him after reading one of his articles. Peter invited me to a Detroit Lions football game. I accepted and flew to Detroit for the day. He drove me around the city and pointed out with wonder the many remnants of Detroit's glory days and the fitful signs of its renewal. Although Peter was more sardonic than sugary, he showed me these treasures with genuine wonder and delight.

It became our annual tradition—either I would fly to Detroit for the day and see new relics he had discovered or new signs of hope, or he would come to Philadelphia. We would spend the day talking about his beloved wife and daughters, his students, and his love for the life of a law school professor.

In between our yearly visits, we would text most fall Sundays about football. During key games, Peter would send me his running commentary drawing from his encyclopedic knowledge of football. He took particular delight in skewering the sacred cows of football, especially the Dallas Cowboys and Aaron Rodgers.

His approach to the law was the same: his knowledge was vast, and he had no use for the fluffy nonsense too many lawyers put out. I can remember him on many occasions repeating an argument some lawyer was

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making, getting a familiar smile on his face, and saying, “Oh, come on.” He used his penetrating intelligence to dissect the argument, cut right to the heart of the legal issue, and explain it in sharp terms. That is why he was in demand as a legal commentator in print and on the radio. As I texted him after listening to one of his NPR appearances, he was “smart but with the common touch.”

The memory of Peter’s warmth, sense of humor, and intelligence will live on in those of us who were privileged to know him. And his legacy in the law will live on as well. As I was writing this, my son told me that he was reading one of Peter’s articles about the criminal discovery rules. I told him to enjoy Peter’s entertaining wisdom, as I did for nearly 40 years.