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Faithful Patriot
Herboth S. (Harry) Ryder: Maestro of Make Believe
(1928-2003) Brilliant Jurist

Harry Ryder's lifelong love of music (both serious and contemporary) was so important to his existence; it is altogether fitting that it be the cornerstone of any story about his life and career.

The song hit of the Broadway revue *Blackbirds* of 1993, featuring Bill (Boojangles) Robinson, was *A Hundred Year*



Form Today: Composers: Victor Young (music) and Ned Washington (lyrics). Singer-actress Ethel Water, accompanied by Benny Goodman and Orchestra, recorded the tune on the Columbia label the same year. Of interest only, perhaps, to old-timers like this scribe who remember the Big Band era, is that others, including Jack Teagarden with his orchestra and Lee Wiley singing with the Casa Loma Orchestra recorded the nostalgic, slow-tempo ballad on 78rpm record about that time.

It could be another hundred year before Florida's 13th Judicial Circuit and Second District Court of Appeal see a combination of qualities like those found in Judge Harry Ryder: a fine legal mind, fluent writer, senses of justice and fairness,

an exuberant, if sometimes moody and quirky personality, a zest for living, and a lover of his fellow man.

It was June 8, 1928 and on that day in Tallahassee, Florida the population increased by one upon the birth of Harry Ryder, destined to be the only issues of Herboth Strother Ryder, native of Roanoke, Virginia and Lillian Lucille Sheffield Ryder from Colquitt in southwest Georgia. The June 8 issue of *The Tampa Tribune* contained columns by the famed O.O McIntire and Edgar Guest. It also carried a full page by L.M Hatton, Jr. recently elected Sheriff of Hillsborough County, thanking voters for their support.

Harry was a junior, named after his father, although he never used the suffix Jr. Herboth is of Germanic origin, meaning “master of the army.” His father was an engineer with the State Road Dept. who built many of the first hard-surfaced roads in that time. The senior Ryder died of a gunshot wound at home under unexplained circumstances: it remains an unsolved mystery. Harry’s mother was obliged to take work to help support her son and herself. For years she was the Executive Secretary to Attorney General Richard W. Ervin. Later becoming a member of the Supreme Court of Florida, Ervin recently died (August 2004) at age 99.

Harry’s mother was also nimble-fingered at the keyboard of the parlor piano in their home. A doting parent, she referred to her son as “Baby” as long as she lived.

Judge Ryder’s birth date made him a Child of Mercury according to astrological lore. Some see that as a kind of voodoo and regard it derisively;

others do not. Believers in the Zodiac signs tend to accept that one's traits of character and personality are influenced or shaped by our sign. With respect to Ryder's sign, one writer put it as follows:

“Children of Mercury are smart. They're fast talkers, quick thinkers, and sharp dressers, whose minds are always racing ahead of the conversation.”

Sounds to this scrivener like an apt description of Harry Ryder!

In 1984, American hero, General Dwight D. Eisenhower was named president of Columbia University. Harry Ryder was then only two years out of Leon High School. In one of his first addresses to students at Columbia, Ike said: “The day that goes by that you don't have fun, that you don't enjoy life.” That is a precise quote, mangled syntax and all, from a soon-to-be American President. It was also expressive of the personal philosophy of a man named Ryder, destined to be down the road a judge of Tampa. That philosophy remained with him until the last days of his life.

Progressing from puberty to percussion, Harry acquired a set of drums, one of his proudest possessions ever, and with his sense of rhythm and manual dexterity he became a talented drummer. After graduating from Leon High, where he drummed in the school marching band in parades and at Seminole football games, he received a music scholarship from the University of Miami at Coral Gables. He experienced the fun of playing in the school symphony, in the Orange Bowl at Miami Hurricane games, and in local dance bands for spending money. In the Army Air Corps during what Archie Bunker called the “Big One”, at least at Minter Field, Bakersfield, CA, band members not

good enough play in the dance orchestra there made up largely of professional musicians, were put into the group which played for parades and drills. The latter was known as the "Blow Band." The writer was stationed at Minter for months in 1944-45, assigned to the band as an alleged trumpet player, but was primarily put to work typing in the morning Report Unit at Headquarters. Writer and young wife even had time to drive our 1929 Model A Ford coupe into Hollywood one weekend where we saw Xavier Cugat tooling out of the Beverly Hill Hotel, Chihuahua perched on his shoulder, behind the wheel of his new Lincoln Zephyr. What a thrill!

After just shy of a year at Coral Gables, like a homing pigeon Harry returned to Tallahassee in June of 1947 when for the first time male students were able to gain admission to Florida State University. In August of 1950, Harry earned his BS in journalism. His memberships in Gold Key (FSU leadership fraternity) and ODK (national leadership society) are, as they say in legal vernacular, prima facie, evidence that he excelled after returning to the friendly confines of Tallahassee. He also joined the old fraternity, Pi Kappa Alpha. Harry and this writer shared membership in the latter brotherhood but Harry stands alone in the leadership achievements attested by his other memberships.

A precursor of Harry; propensity for writing legal opinions as a judge later in life was his involvement in the FSU newspaper, *The Florida Flambeau*. He held several editorial positions with the paper, one summer

serving as editor-in-chief. After graduation, he went to work for a time with the *Panama City News Herald*.

During his tenure at Florida State, Harry formed a lasting and warm friendship with Earl W. Dobert, a now retired newspaperman who still has former associates in the Tampa area who remember the splendid work he did with both the *Tampa Daily Times* and *The Tampa Tribune*. Earl said he retired in 1987 to Tallahassee to watch the Seminoles play football. He reports having taken in several operas in New York with Ryder whom he says was a devotee of classical music. Earl roomed with Harry at Lillian Ryder's home for a time during their student years in the stated capitol. Dobert recounts a couple of anecdotes about "Life with Harry in Tallahassee:"

"Harry, Dal Albirton and I scheduled a golf game at Capitol City Golf Club one day while we were students. I had never played in my life, and I doubt that Harry or Dal had played very much. The first 2 holes went along quite well, but the 3rd hole was a disaster. Harry and Dal teed off before me and started walking off the tee and up a short hill on a par 3 hole. My tee shot caught Harry in the back of the head and knocked him down. Luckily, my drive wasn't too powerful and Harry wasn't badly hurt. That's the last hole I ever played. I always kidded Harry that it probably was my fault he became bald at such an early age."

"Harry and I would drive back and forth to school in an old Plymouth, one of the last built at the onset of World War II. One of the most vivid memories of those daily trips was Harry's effort to save gas money. On each return trip he would switch off the engine at the top of the street leading down the paved road to his house. We would roll two blocks down the hill; take a sharp right onto his street, and then another sharp right into the driveway. To this day, I can't imagine that maneuver saved much gas."

I was proud to be counted as one of Harry's friends and I wish he were still around to preside over the July Fourth Days. I surely miss him. Unfortunately, during most of his years on the bench I was pursuing my career in New York, California and Connecticut, and I didn't return to Florida until 1987."

After his intervening service, including his fascinating “Spy-catching” time in counterintelligence, Harry transmogrified into a Gator and went to Gainesville to enroll at the University Of Florida College Of Law. His time there at Bryan Hall led to his Jurist Doctor degree in February 1959.

Meanwhile, Harry Ryder and a petite beauty, Mary Lou Muster, fulfilled the marital destiny of each when they married in Dahlen, Berlin on September 17, 1954. It was a civil ceremony in the German language to comport with the law in that place at that time. A second service in English at an Air Force chapel conducted by a priest was held on the next day, and the reception followed. When asked for a brief personal history, Mary Lou replied:

“I was born in Boynton Beach, Florida to Rose Edith Murray Muster and Paul Taylor Muster. Mother also born in Boynton, father a transplant to Florida from Bellaire, Ohio at an early age. I spent my entire 12 years of public schooling at one-campus Boynton Elementary, Jr. High, and high school. I had already spent two years in kindergarten right behind the campus, enjoyed the beach, reading, biking, and friends prior to attending Florida State and my three and a half years there. Received a BA in English/ Journalism in 1951. I worked on the Editorial Staff at the *Delray Beach News* prior to our marriage. Following our marriage I taught school- English and the elementary grades until the girls were born. Life loves other than Harry the girl and grandson, are swimming, biking, rowing, canoeing, reading, gardening, sewing, cooking and entertaining friends and family.”

On May 7, 1956, after receiving the National Defense Medal and Army Occupation Medal, he was separated from service in the Air Force and quickly became a force in Tampa’s legal community. Even before successfully passing the Florida Bar exam, he was taken on as an associate

with the Fowler White law firm in Tampa under the tutelage of veteran lawyer Jimmie Thompson. Harry worked under Thompson in Workers Compensation, and insurance defense. After a year or so with the aforementioned firm, he worked a field attorney for the National Labor Relations Board. He also saw service as an Assistant Attorney General of Florida.

A look back at the command structure in the office of State Attorney Paul B. Johnson as of June 1, 1963, shows that Herboth S. Ryder was head of the Circuit Court and General Assignment Division. Harry's I.D card issued September 1, 1961, pictured an usually somber newly appointed Asst. State Attorney, Height 5-8 1/2, Weight: 145lbs. The personnel roster lists Margie Folsom as Secretary in Ryder's division, with Joyce Pelaez assisting as required. Ms. Folsom later became Judicial Assistant to Circuit Judge James S. Moody: both are now deceased. Veteran Tampa lawyer, John R. Lawson, Jr., now retired, headed up what was then called Homicide and General Assignments Division in the early months of 1963 when Ryder's special assignment under Lawson was Vice and related cases. Lawson says that before long, Harry's infectious geniality became something everyone in the office enjoyed, a sort of hallmark of the Division. For example, first thing each day he'd flash his big grin, and banter Lawson with, "How's things goin', Boss Man?" slightly exaggerating his natural Southern drawl. Lawson's stories pertaining to Harry Ryder are capacious. For example:

“The intellectual side of Harry’s mind enabled him to quickly grasp both the legal and factual detail of the cases, while the common sense side enabled him to quickly identify the detail that really mattered and isolated them from those that did not really matter. This made things easier for all of us.”

“Given his good nature, he was undaunted by not being physically big. One of Harry’s favorite jokes was to boast to some big guy, that despite being small, he had played in the Orange Bowl. Then Harry would wait a while before confessing, he was in the FSU (and Miami) bands and they played in a halftime show there.”

Ryder’s rapid, almost meteoric, rise to prominence in the Tampa & Hillsborough Bar probably began when he teamed up with his old college chum, A. Dallas (Dal) Albritton, who had cobbled together an excellent small firm. It was composed of Albritton, as senior partner, the Sessums brothers, T. Terrell and Steve, the late Al Gordon- Albritton, Sessums & Gordon being the firm name. Not long after Harry joined as a partner, the firm brought in still another top-flight lawyer, J. Bert Grandoff, and the firm became Albritton, Sessums, Ryder and Grandoff.

Dal Albritton, long a distinguished lawyer and leader in the Tampa legal fraternity, past president of the Bar Association, and close personal friend of Judge Ryder was rightly proud of Ryder’s rare ability to form a strong bond with his client. He was, says Albritton, “ a passionate advocate, especially for the poor and disable.” With his great verbal facility, gift of language, and the ability to find the right words at precisely the right time befitting the occasion, Dal composed a beautiful memorial tribute to his old friend which appeared in the May 2003 edition of *Lawyer*.

Tall, articulate, dignified- three word fairly descriptive of T. Terrell Sessums, another former law partner. He amplifies Albritton's estimate of Ryder's strengths as practicing lawyer:

"Few lawyers earned as much trust and loyalty from their clients as Harry. These devoted clients, who quickly became his friends, frequently brought him gifts of oranges, strawberries, and other items including a ripcord. It was one client's treasured souvenir of his last parachute jump over Europe in World War II, a gift Harry proudly mounted, framed and placed on the wall in his extensive gallery of photographs and memorabilia. Later, when I was elected Speaker of the House, I was privileged to have Harry Ryder travel to Tallahassee to administer my oath of office. A picture of this occasion is one of my prized possessions. We remember his quick wit, ready smile, good humor, practical jokes, his Aunt Harriet letters to the editor, shared cartoons, and gregarious nature enabled him to become the life of any party. Harry added spice to enrich each of our lives."

Hon. Don Castor, retired County Judge who served with distinction for many years, was associated with the Albritton, Sessums combine early in his career in Tampa. He remembered Judge Ryder for his subtle sense of humor:

"As a new associate with the firm in 1969, I was often a target for Ryder's "put-down", but it was always in good humor, and with a twinkle in his eye."

The Albritton firm's last partner, J. Bert Grandoff was *in particeps criminis*, so to speak, with Ryder on several occasions:

"From time to time, Harry and I would have breakfast before showing up at the offices of Albritton, Sessums, Ryder & Grandoff. One of our favorite spots was The Old Meeting House on Howard Ave. Occasionally, we would leave the restaurant and head south to Bayshore Blvd., Harry in his car and I close behind him. Upon reaching Bayshore and turning left to head into downtown, Harry would signal me that he was pulling over on the right side of the road. As he did this he would get out of the car, walk to the seawall and begin staring down into the water. I would abruptly stop, leave the car door open and hurry to the seawall to join him. At that point we

would both be looking into the water and pointing vigorously. Within a few moments, other cars were pulling over and stopping, at which point Harry and I would get back into our cars and drive off, make a complete circle and return to the scene, at which time there might be as many as ten cars all pulled over and the driver all looking into the water....at nothing!”

Before being favored with his first judicial appointment by Governor Reubin Askew, his friend and former classmate at FSU, Harry developed the specialty of representing employee/claimants in Workers Compensation cases before Deputy Commissioners (now rightly referred to as Judges). One of his former antagonists in those years was an outstanding member of their insurance defenses Bar in Tampa for many years—John McQuigg. The latter tells something of his professional contact with Ryder.

“From experience in litigation, it soon became clear to me that Harry was highly ethical and intelligent. As a court-appointed attorney in a federal criminal case, I called on Harry for practical advice. My client was in prison for premeditated murder although he insisted that the gun had fired by accident as he was pulling it from his pocket to settle a barroom dispute. My question to Harry was whether or not my client could be right when the autopsy report showed that the bullet entered the decedent’s head between the eyes and went straight back. Harry said, “If you’re in an argument and your opponent is trying to pull something out of his pocket, where would you be looking?” Later, habeas corpus was granted.”

Harry demonstrated his high standing with the rank and file of his fellow lawyers when he was elected President of Hillsborough County Bar Association in 1969, - a remarkable achievement for 40 years not admitted to practice until 1959, and Tampa lawyers for relatively short period of time.

A genuine Southern Belle is Dot Vines from Montgomery, Ala. For many productive years Dot was Executive Director of the Bar Association in

his county. She was not only competent, but with great charm and good looks.

Three out of the three isn't bad in any league. Her impressions about Harry

Ryder follow:

"I first knew Harry Ryder as a member of the board of directors of the HCBA back in the days when both membership and board meetings were held at the old Floridian Hotel. Rex Farior, Jr. was president of the association and Harry was on the board when I started to work. He was easy to get to know and to talk to. He had an office filled with pictures and lived to tell stories about all of them.

When Rex took office, Harry was serving as program chairman. Rex decided in his wisdom to discontinue the postal card notices of meetings and to rely upon on the newly started "Bulletin." I think that is the very fine, sophisticated magazine now known as "LAWYER." Anyway, it was edited by a great guy later to serve with distinction on the circuit bench- the Hon. John P. Griffin. Because the "Bulletin" was not always timely delivered and attendance at meetings was sparse, Harry insisted that meeting notices be sent out. Later, with his journalistic background, he became a very able editor of the "Bulletin."

"I'm not sure of the time frame, but after serving as "Bulletin" editor, Harry and Tom Clark (of Carlton Fields) were in a very close race for president of HCBA. Harry was elected by a narrow margin. Clark became a judge on the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. He is now a Senior Judge-Ret."

Former Chief Asst. Public Defender Tom Meyers has a short story about an incident involving an obviously mentally deranged defendant present before Judge Ryder, presiding over felony cases. That particular individual suddenly went out of control and had to be subdued by a number of bailiffs assisted by some lawyers in the courtroom while being taken headfirst out of the courtroom through a swinging door, using the defendants head but in no way hurting him, pushed opened the swinging door. At that point, from the bench, Judge Ryder said: "Let the record show that the mean by which the defendant was taken from the courtroom in no way injured him."

Fun making and festivities, as has been noted, always received the “Ryder Seal of Approval.” One of the judge’s friend attorney J. Scott Taylor, whose late father, James F. Taylor, Jr., was the well-known and long-serving Clerk of Circuit Court in Tampa. Scott Taylor tells of a title bestowed upon Harry that few knew he held:

“He was “The Judge Royal, Gunners’ Guild, Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla.” The Krewe has always relied on cannon fire to add to the festivities. There are about 25 members of the Krewe who fire the cannons and belong to the Gunners’ Guild. Each year the Guild has a Bar-B-Q and Cannon Shoot and, while I was Cannon Master, I always made sure that Harry was invited.” The last event Harry attended was the 84th Annual Gunners’ Guild Bar-B-Q and Cannon Shoot, held at Gunner Gene Forgarty’s ranch in South Pasco County. Don’t remember the year, although I do recall Harry’s glee at the Pasco Sheriff’s office coming out three times to see what all the noise was all about.”

Harry was appointed judge of the Court of Record in Hillsborough County in 1971 by Governor Askew. Escambia County was the situs of the first Court of Record in the state. Not a constitutional court, it was created by the legislature to provide a forum heard at the Circuit level. The writer recently saw an old photo of Judge Ryder at his desk. On it was a small freestanding nameplate reading, “Harry S. Ryder, Judge, Court of Records.” The last name of the court name was incorrectly pluralized. Judges of many so-called ‘inferior’ courts in Florida became Circuit Judges when Art. V, Fla. Const. was amended eff. Jan.1, 1973. Harry was never opposed at any time during his tenure to wearing a black robe. Hence, his name never appeared on the ballot in any election.

One of Harry's favorite tricks, remembered well by former Circuit Judge Charles G. Scruggs, III, who served with Ryder in the Felony Division of the Court. The gimmick worked this way: Harry would conceal a telephone in his coat pocket prior to getting on an elevator. A device to produce a sound like a ringing phone would be in another pocket or package. When the bell began to ring, Harry would pull out the phone and appear to be answering it. Then he would say to whoever was standing next to him: 'It's for you.' That stunt invariably produced guffaws.

Ryder's flair for showmanship and penchant for finding unusual ways to entertain himself and his friends led him to buy recording equipment and other paraphernalia needed to set up a studio in the kitchen of his home. He and his friends, like Dr. Bill Branch, Jerry Rock, Al Hutchinson, and Phil Morgan created mythical radio stations, which "broadcast" music and patter from imaginary locations. Essentially what they would do is use a microphone in sync with the recording of music of all kinds, including the classics, to make audio cassettes. The site of Harry's first "station" was WKGB, from the ballroom of the Grand Algonquin Hotel in the great city of Pahokee on the banks of the late, greatly polluted Lake Okeechobee. He even had stationery made up for BCC (The Boa Broadcasting Company) with the name and location of eight radio stations listed in the left border of the letterhead- a variation of the imaginative public radio genius of Garrison Keillor, creator of Lake Woebegone.

Harry and Mary Lou's parties at their Tampa home on July 4th every year are legendary. They were a celebration of life, good time, and America. Good food and Harry's choice of good German beers were served. If he was available, Earl Doherty read the Bill of Rights from the Constitution. Those in attendance were an eclectic assembly, like this country, a cross-section of the community of all shades of skin and faiths. Harry's ecumenicism, years earlier, resulted in the removal of restrictions, which excluded non-whites from membership in the Bar Association.

Judge Ryder was appointed to the Second District Court of Appeal on Sept. 16, 1977 by the same chief executive who selected him for the judiciary six years earlier. He became not only widely respected but one of the most industrious members of the Court. According to Valeria Hendricks, who authored a postmortem, excellent piece on Judge Ryder for the Appellate Practice Section of the Florida Bar, Judge Ryder wrote 900 opinions during his nearly 20 years as an appellate judge. At the end of 1996, he retired from the Court at age 68.

Before bidding farewell to a celebrated jurist, all of us, especially lawyers, can respect brief "closing statements" from co-workers with first-hand knowledge of his ability and performance:

Judicial Assistants, known as JA's in the legal Community, usually go with the judge when he or she moves from the private sector into pure public service. No one is better informed than the JA about the judge's habits, his or

her strengths and weaknesses and it is the JA who becomes, really, a member of the judge's extended family over a lifetime.

Judge Ryder was fortunate to have an assistant with the personality, loyalty and ability of Gail Byrd, who still serves on the 2nd District Court as assistant to Judge Patricia J. Kelly.

Gail still recalls the following story from her longtime service with Harry Ryder:

“While Harry was a Circuit Judge in the criminal division, I could always tell when something strange or funny had occurred in the courtroom because he would come storming in the back door of his chambers, his robe flying behind him, and he would either be laughing or cursing. Well, this particular day he was laughing so hard he could hardly speak. It seems Harry asked a defendant if he understood that he was being charged with assault and battery. The defendant responded that he did not know why he was in court; he didn't put any salt in that battery!!!!

“I grew up with Harry Ryder, and it was an honor and privilege to have known him. He was kind, honest, stubborn, very intelligent, and patriotic, had a great sense of humor, a charmer, could play drumsticks like Krupa, could tell a dirty joke with class, and could pour a bottle of beer in a glass like no other.”

Hon. Stephen H. Grimes:

“Harry Ryder was a hail fellow, well-met individual who loved to interact with other people. As you know, he spent several years in the CIA where I understand his job was running agents out of the Berlin office during the Cold War.

He loved to joke and was very witty. He had a huge collection of hats. On one occasion, he outfitted the entire Second District court of Appeal Judges with black and white hats which said ‘Second DCA’ on them.”

Hon. John M. Scheb:

“The governor appointed Harry Ryder to the 2nd Dist. Court in 1977, about 2 ½ yrs after my appointment. I served with him until my retirement in 1992. Harry was a very capable judge and a fine colleague. He brought to the court a fine background in civil, criminal,

and administrative law and a strong writing ability, gained in part by his experience as a journalist. He had a very strong allegiance to constitutional principle, especially the Fourth Amendment, and he opened some of the court's finest opinions in that area. We frequently debated legal issues, but we never dissented from one another's written opinions. He loved to poke fun at himself. Once during an oral argument when a lawyer described a truck tire as being 'bald,' Harry rubbed his head and said, 'I'd prefer you to use a different description.'"

(John Scheb served with distinction on the 2nd Dist. Court of Appeal until his retirement. He now lives in Sarasota.)

Hon. John R. Blue:

"I first met Harry when appointed to the 2nd DCA in 1992. He was from Tallahassee and a Florida State graduate. As a result we started on excellent terms because I was the second FSU graduate to ever serve on the Court. Our relationship continued after he retired. Often to my embarrassment, Harry loved to send e-mail. Many were not appropriate for a judge's computer. I could almost hear Harry chortling when he mailed them out. I would open, laugh and delete." (Retired and in Private practice in St. Petersburg)

Velma Johnson (Marshal, 2d Dist. Court of Appeal)

"I became acquainted with Judge Ryder when I came to the Court as judicial assistant to Judge Monterey Campbell. I recall being slightly 'afraid' of him because I had been warned he was sort of moody. The Court has periodic reunions of members of the court and former staff. At the first on I attended, Judge Ryder was there dressed in a pair of overalls and an old straw hat, drinking beer and having a grand old time. He was not always a happy person, but he was that day and I saw him in a different light. He was an extraordinary man, and we became friends. When he retired from the court, he gave me a piece of pyrite he had found and kept in his office. I think he knew I would treasure such a gift from him and I do; I still use it as a paperweight. In return I gave him a glass paperweight shaped like an owl 'for my wise old friend.'"

Judge Ryder served as Chief Justice of the Court from 1984 to 1986.

In addition to being chosen to be president of the Florida Conference of

District Court of Appeal Judges, 1990-1991, he was active in a great number

of societies and organizations, so extensive that space does not allow them to be named.

He was in good health throughout most of his professional life, but after retirement his health began to fail. He had several TIAs, developed Parkinsons, and suffered chronic pain from an injury to his back. His death took place at his home in Gilchrist County, Florida, on March 9, 2003 at 74. He was survived by his wife, Mary Lou; daughters, Stacy Ryder Miller of Tallahassee and Lee Anne Ryder of Tampa, and a grandson, Geoffrey Clinton Miller.

Robert Morley, famed British stage and screen star, liked to visit a cemetery in London where a special section venerated those who died young. He took comfort somehow in reading the maxims on the grave markers, like, "God Came Early" and "Lent Briefly". This scribe designs to suggest that the stone or monument at the site of Harry Ryder's final resting place could appropriately read: "Not Long Enough."

Morison Buck

After word:

Robert Maynard Hutchins (1899- 1977), famed educator who was the youngest Dean ever of Yale Law School, liked to quote a homily attributed to his father: "Avoid undue solemnity. The laughter which laughs never at people, but with people, helps to carry a strong man's message to men."