

TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR MILLER

CHARLES GIBSON*

It's somewhat difficult to come this late in the program, as most things have already been referenced. I actually prepared remarks in a song called "What Would Arthur Miller Do," but that role was usurped. There was reference made by one of the speakers to all of the great legal minds that are on this stage. I applied to three law schools, and I went zero for three. This is obviously a very important event, so important that Arthur has put on a vest.

Absolutely true story: for a time my elder daughter was dating a young man, a Harvard grad who was at Georgetown Law. This was before she herself went to law school. The young fellow had a question he posed at our dining room table, one night, about whether he should advance his career by taking a clerkship that he had been offered, or a prospective job that offered much greater remuneration, of which he was in need, with educational loans to repay.

"Why don't you call Arthur Miller for advice," she said. He looked at her incredulously.

"Do you know Arthur Miller?" he said.

"Sure, my father works with him. He was at my folks' anniversary party last year."

His jaw dropped, and he said, "Arthur Miller is a god."

I told Arthur that story. I wasn't sure I should. Rather than finding it amusing, I was very worried he might agree with the young man.

As has been noted here by previous speakers, Arthur was Legal Editor for ABC's *Good Morning America* for twenty years. For nine of those years I was the host of the program. I had the best of both worlds: I got a legal education from Arthur Miller, and I never had to worry about getting a grade. And I got to ask the questions. He would have five or six minutes on the air to explain a legal issue, or dissect some case that was in the public consciousness at the time.

But the times I treasure, and there were many of them, were when he would sit for as long as I had questions, to explain the law, and its intricacies and its nuances to me. We would talk legal specifics, and we would talk legal theories. In my thirty-three years at ABC, I worked with many professors, members of the academy. And

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I can count on the fingers of one hand those who could make their subjects come alive for the audience. Arthur was, and Arthur is, the best. He could make almost anything understandable for a mass audience, but the most important thing to me is that he never dumbed down his message, and he never patronized his audience.

A number of times on *Good Morning America* we had Arthur debate an issue for ten minutes or so with Alan Dershowitz. I wish morning television did such things still, but I remember one time in particular it was spirited, as you might expect. Neither gave the other any quarter. But what made it most memorable to me is that I had a chance to speak with each one of them separately after the broadcast. Both of them said, "Well, I guess I got the better of him today."

And a lot has been said about *Miller's Court*. I always made it a point to watch it. Arthur attracted the most amazing panelists: prominent lawyers, ethicists, government officials, judges, even sometimes Supreme Court justices. That was a long time ago, as has been mentioned, when that show was on the air. John Marshall, I always thought, made a great guest. But being something of a student of television hosting, I watched Arthur closely, and I learned a lot from Arthur then as well. Tying the panel in knots with his hypotheticals and complex questions. And so one time I thought, "I'll try that method on *Good Morning America*." I forget what the issue was, but I posed some "Well, what if . . ." question to the guest. He knocked it out of the park, and I had no comeback, which Arthur always did, and I remember thinking, "You idiot, don't try to copy the master."

Reference was made to Arthur as a pussycat, I think something of a puppy dog. I understand he's tough in class. He may have dressed down a student or two. But I doubt there are many times when any Arthur Miller-trained lawyer is caught flatfooted. In the end his students, I suspect, indeed I know, prosper and pass their courses. He can't be so tough. I think of Calvin Trillin's remark: "If law school were so tough, why are there so many lawyers?"

There was one time when I heard Arthur express some doubt, out of character, I realize. That's probably why I remember it. We were riding on a bus to some *Good Morning America* location, and Arthur talked about former students coming to him in their late forties, early fifties, switching into second careers, either burnt out or disillusioned about the law. And Arthur, for a minute, got quite reflective and started to question whether his teaching had been quite good enough, that maybe there had been something that he could've done, should've done, that would keep them more ener-

2011]

GIBSON TRIBUTE

25

gized or enthused about their profession. It saddened me for a moment, because I can't imagine anyone who would do a better job energizing students, or engendering enthusiasm, than Arthur. His enthusiasm seems boundless, and his passions are infectious. And his interests are so varied.

For proof the latter, I do point you to the Japan Society, just mentioned, where that exhibition of works of Utagawa Kuniyoshi are now being shown, and those works, as mentioned, come from the personal collection of Arthur R. Miller. I didn't know much about Kuniyoshi, but I spent some time researching him on the Internet. I did not use Google, Arthur, I did not. The press release announcing the exhibition says his works, and I'm quoting here, "depict giant spiders, skeletons and toads, Chinese ruffians, woman warriors, haggard ghosts, and desperate samurai combat." It all sounds like the depiction of a law school faculty meeting.

You can make a lot of money being a lawyer. H.L. Mencken once remarked, "Lawyers protect us against robbery by removing the temptation." Arthur has done well, but I suspect had he devoted himself entirely to legal practice, he would have been a very rich man. Instead, he devoted himself to teaching, and there is no more honorable profession in the world. Whether teaching a television host at 6:15 in the morning, and I can tell you sometimes the vest was unbuttoned. That was exciting! Or whether he's talking to dozens in a lecture hall, or whether he's speaking to millions through the medium of television, I think we would all agree there is no better teacher than Arthur Miller.

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