Frier chairs Department of Classical Studies

Bruce W. Frier, the Henry King Ransom Professor of Law, has been named interim chair of the Department of Classical Studies in the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LS&A).

Frier currently holds joint appointments in the Law School and the Department of Classical Studies. He joined LS&A in 1969 and became a full professor in 1983. He was a visiting lecturer in the Law School from 1981 until 1986, when he became a professorial member of the Law School faculty.

Frier earned his B.A. cum laude at Trinity College and his doctorate in classics at Princeton University. He also was honored with a fellowship at the American Academy in Rome. His research interests include Roman law and legal history; Roman social, economic, and demographic history; Hellenistic and Roman historiographies, legal theory, and the sociology of law; and classical and modern rhetoric. He is the author of numerous books and articles, among them (with R.S. Bagnall) The Demography of Roman Egypt; Libri Annales Pontificum Maximorum: The Origins of the Annalistic Tradition; "More is Worse: Some Observations on the Population of the Roman Empire" (in Debating Roman Demography); and "Tenants and Tenancy" (in the forthcoming Cambridge Guide to Classical Civilization).
Professor Beverley J. Pooley, LL.M. ’58, S.J.D. ’61, dies at 67

Professor Emeritus Beverley J. Pooley, LL.M. ’58, S.J.D. ’61, a member of the Law School community since 1962, died August 23 of complications from pancreatic cancer. He was 67.

Pooley, whose innovative enthusiasm for teaching etched him into the memory of every law student who ever sat in his classroom, had taken emeritus status in 1998 but continued to come to the Law School regularly, where his jovial English accent livened up many a hallway. He was born in England in 1934.

As director of the Law Library from 1964-84, Pooley guided a major expansion of library holdings and was at the helm for the planning and development of the dramatic underground addition, the Allan F and Alene Smith Law Library, which opened in 1981.

“I learned a great deal from Bev, as did everyone who worked with him,” current Law Library Director Margaret Leary wrote in a memorial tribute to Pooley for Law Library Journal.

“He used what I call the Socratic style of management, always asking hard questions and never providing easy answers. When I sought answers, through my own investigation, research, and thinking, I always emerged wiser. When I thought I had a solution, and proposed it to him, I could count on him to uncover every possible ramification and help resolve them all. . . . He supported my career in every possible way, from hiring me to enabling me to become the director.”

Pooley’s “precocious and formidable” credentials in the field of law are known to every student of law. He participated in the joy of sharing the wit and wisdom of a truly Renaissance man,” long-time Law School colleague Douglas A. Kahn wrote in a memorial for the Association of American Law Schools.

“He cared passionately about his pedagogical role,” said Kahn, the Paul G. Kauper Professor of Law. “Over the many years that he taught Contracts, Sports Law, Entertainment Law, and African Law, he never treated his classroom work as secondary. No matter how familiar the material was to him, Bev would spend hours preparing for each class and planning how the material was to be ‘packaged’ to the students.”

“Those of us on the faculty who were fortunate to have known Bev for his many years at Michigan, and the few years that he had after his retirement, have suffered an irreplaceable loss,” Kahn continued. “He was an exceptional person who literally lit up a room when he entered it. He had a charismatic personality and a sharp wit. His humor never had a mean thrust to it, but often had a subtle serious point underlining it.”

All the world was a stage to Pooley, whose community activities centered on theater and performance. His wife, Pat, was a founder/owner of the elegant Ann Arbor restaurant The Moveable Feast, which she sold about the time of his retirement. He and Pat were married for 43 years and had two children, Rachel and Christopher.

“Bev may have been the most theatrical professor ever to have been a member of our faculty,” Dean Jeffrey S. Lehman, ’81, said of the late teacher. “He used his acting abilities in the classroom to teach students in ways other professors could not . . . Bev is one of those faculty members who captures a special place in the heart of our students.”

A favorite story told of Pooley recalls the time that he teamed with his friend, actor John Houseman, to present a skit in class that came right out of the 1970s film Paper Chase, in which Houseman had starred as a law professor.

As students entered the classroom, they found Houseman, not Pooley, at the front of the classroom in the teacher’s role. Houseman posed a legal problem, looked to the back of the room — and called on Pooley, who missed the answer. Houseman called Pooley to the front of the classroom, dug into his pocket, and gave the hapless “student” a coin. “Call your mother,” Houseman said sternly, “and tell her that you will never be a lawyer.”

Pooley’s inquisitive intellect ranged over many subjects. “He has written in the areas of land use, contracts, and African law,” noted his retirement notice to the U-M Board of Regents in June 1998. “For decades, he has been one of the most popular teachers in the Law School, developing courses in African law, sports law, and entertainment law, in addition to introducing large numbers of students to the basics of contracts.”

Outside the classroom, too, Pooley’s impact was significant. Law students found him easily accessible. Many local residents felt that they knew him from his variety of theatrical roles — Captain Hook in “Peter Pan,” Sheridan Whiteside in “The Man Who Came to Dinner,” Salieri in “Amadeus,” Applegate in “Damn Yankees,” Sidney Bruhl in “Deathtrap,” and, in his final performance last spring, as Captain Corcoran in Gilbert and Sullivan’s “H.M.S. Pinafore.” Members of the local theater community knew him as a witty, energetic, welcome participant and supporter.

“It’s a huge loss in this town,” said one local director/choreographer. “In a city full of stars, Bev glowed brighter than most, and brightened our lives as well,” wrote Ann Arbor News columnist Geoff Lorcom. Pooley was “67 going on 30.” Ann Arbor drama/film critic Christopher Potter wrote in a fond memorial.

Pooley also held an M.A. in library science from the University of Michigan and a B.A. and LL.B. from Cambridge University in England. He came to the Law School from the University of Ghana.

A memorial service was held for Pooley in October and a memorial fund has been established at the Law School in his name. Donations to the Beverley J. Pooley Memorial Fund may be sent to:

Office of Development and Alumni Relations
University of Michigan Law School
721 South State Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104-3071

Checks should be made out to the University of Michigan and designated for the Beverley J. Pooley Memorial Fund. For more information telephone 734.615.4507.