

## A RUNNING CONVERSATION

*Thomas C. Galligan, Jr.\**

“AMANDA, let’s talk about what you’ve done as a dean that you’re glad you did,” Tony said.

“You mean as in institutional advancement, appointments, increased diversity, and curricular reform?” Amanda asked.

“No, I mean personal stuff.” Tony replied.

“As in meeting alumni, getting to know students—”

“No,” Tony interrupted. “I mean stuff you did for you.”

“Like still teaching—”

“No,” Tony stopped her again, with no apparent sense of remorse or breach of etiquette. “We talked about that before.”<sup>1</sup>

“Then, not like continuing to write, I suppose,” Amanda’s voice had a lilt. She always liked being quizzed by Tony. He was, as her 14-year-old might say, “such a law professor.”

“We’ve sort of talked about that, too,”<sup>2</sup> said Tony. “I’m interested in what you’ve done in the last six years for you. Six years, right?”

“Yes,” Amanda nodded.

“Long time,” said Tony. “But I want to know what you’ve done for you that’s worked out. You know, what’s given you a lift.” Tony emphasized the word ‘you.’

“Hmmm,” Amanda pursed her lips and furrowed her brow.

“Tough one?” Tony proudly asked.

“Just requires some thought. Well, I will admit that during my first year or so as dean I missed more of my kids’ stuff than I had before.” Amanda thought back.

“Like?” Tony sought to draw her out.

“Like school programs for instance. Jamie had to bear most of that burden.” Amanda felt like she was confessing. Then she continued. “Actually, I was okay on the stuff at night: band concerts, evening sports, school open houses.”

“I suppose school open houses are a good time for a law school dean to show up in the community.” Tony opined with a trace of sarcasm.

“I’m not so devious; I am really interested in what my kids are doing.” Amanda crossed her arms in mock anger.

“I’m sure you are,” said Tony.

“Anyway,” Amanda continued, “I was good about most of the evening activities but not as good during the day. And, I certainly tended to not *just* show up unannounced in the day for things. And, in hindsight, I think it was worse for the youngest two. They were in fourth and first grade when we moved. The older two were in eighth and sixth, and I had developed better habits with them over the years. For the younger two, I just sort of leaned on Jamie. Jamie knew it, and I think the kids did too.”

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1. Thomas C. Galligan, Jr., *The View from the Podium*, 31 U. TOL. L. REV. 593 (2000).  
2. Thomas C. Galligan, Jr., *Scholarship Rag*, 35 U. TOL. L. REV. 55 (2003).

"So that's not something that sounds like it was good for you," said Tony.

"It wasn't, so I've really tried since then to make an effort to show up more," said Amanda.

"You mean you don't go to everything?" Tony asked in mock surprise.

"No, although I've heard stories from other deans that they've never missed one of their kids' or family's events," said Amanda.

"Never?"

"That's what they say and more power to them but I've only tried to do better, not be at everything."

"And the kids appreciate it?" Tony asked.

"I don't know; I think so," said Amanda. "But it definitely makes me feel better."

"Selfish?"

"I guess so, but as that first year or so as dean went on, I felt like I was missing too much of their lives. And, even though I was professionally engaged and involved in a way I had never been before I became a dean, I still felt like I was missing part of my children's lives and my own life. I think it's us—Jamie and me—but some people go on vacation and go out to dinner without their kids. We like to take our kids with us. We like to go out *with* them. Anyway, I try harder now to get to more of my kids' events. Not all, but more. Sometimes I can't. But other times I'll try to juggle things in advance to be able to go."

"You are an admirable parent," said Tony, slightly bowing.

"Not in the least, and I will say that when one of the kids comes home and says: 'We have a choral concert or dance recital or mandatory field trip meeting tomorrow night' and I know I'm going to have a long hard day beforehand I always ask: 'How long have you known about this?' But, I still try and make it." Amanda half-sighed.

"Okay. Go to more of your kids' stuff. What else have you done that's good for you?" Tony asked. "Took vacation?"

"Sure, that's a good thing," answered Amanda.

"You don't sound convinced," said Tony.

"No, I am. I just think what works for some people might not work for others and vice versa."

"That's deep," said Tony.

"Well, what I mean is that vacations can be tiring, but while they're great and we've taken them and they do always seem to rejuvenate me, I need more." Amanda said.

"Does Jamie still go fly fishing?"

"Once a year with his friend from Seattle. That works for Jamie, just staring at the fly. And, the last two years he's taken one of the kids with him, too." Amanda said. "Now, for me, real vacations help. We tend to go to Disney World. But, these things help too. These conferences we do together on torts. Getting to work on something substantive with a friend is good for me."

"You flatter me." Tony said.

"I meant to; I never know when I might need you," Amanda smiled. "But it really is nice to talk about torts stuff and recall why I love my subject."

"Like the teaching and writing we've already talked about?" Tony asked.

"Yes."

"And?" Tony continued. "What else do you do for you?"

"Running," Amanda said with determination.

"Running?"

"Yes. Running. I am still obsessive compulsive about my running."

"Even if it means less time with the family or less time for scholarship?" Tony inquired.

"Yes. No question." Amanda stated.

"How come? The exercise?"

"That's a big part of it, but there's more." Amanda considered her answer.

"Such as?"

"Well, I sometimes say that running keeps me as sane as I am. And, I think that's true. I still try to run four or five days per week, and I still try to do it in the evening before I go home. I think it helps me leave the day at the office." Amanda said.

"A transition thing," Tony commented.

"Yes. You know, I've told you before that my mother could lose her temper at the drop of a hat or even at the movement of a hat without it dropping." Amanda recalled how embarrassed her mother's outbursts would make her. "She'd even blow up with guests in the house."

"I remember you telling me about her, but what's that have to do with running?" Tony did not see the connection.

"I'll get there. I'll get there. I think I overcompensate and try *not* to show my anger at work, at least I try not to show it to the person I'm angry at—"

"You mean," Tony jumped in with mock surprise, "you talk behind people's backs?"

"Never. My twelve-year-old says I should *never* do that. Now, she admits that she does it, but she does not recommend talking behind backs for me." Amanda grinned.

"Sounds like good advice and good practice," said Tony. "Remind me to tell you about Jim later. But, now let's get back to the running."

"Sure thing," Amanda continued. "Anyway, I try not to show my anger. I get angry. I just don't blow up. The running helps me get rid of some of that energy, so it doesn't come out sideways *too* much. Yelling alone in the car helps, too. People think you're singing instead of screaming."

"Very primal," said Tony. "Yell or flight, but you call the flight part running."

"Thanks for the anthropological psychoanalysis, Doctor," said Amanda.

"No problem," Tony nodded.

"And, I basically love it. When I go for a long run on a Saturday, it clears my head and no matter how often I do it, it makes me feel as if I've accomplished something—"

"You're a dean. You administrate, whatever that is; you teach; you raise money. And, it's running that makes you feel like you've accomplished something?" Tony seemed genuinely curious and not just asking to ask.

"That other stuff is all professional, or intellectual, or social. Running is physical. There's a difference. And, even though I consider myself a dedicated runner, I'm not great at it, as in winning races, so it's something I do more for myself than for external reward or recognition."

"Do you run alone?" Tony asked.

"I run alone and with people. Just like when we taught together at State U. There are a group of faculty, staff, and students who run together at our school. If no one else is running or I'm out of town, I'll run alone." Amanda said. "Lee Bollinger, the president of Columbia, says he runs alone and sorts things out. I think he's right.<sup>3</sup> Alone, I sort things out, at least I try to cut through some of the psychic noise. But, I do love to run with people."

"So running is a little community building?" Tony said, more than asked.

"I suppose so," said Amanda.

"Now, don't you worry about what people might think?" Tony asked.

"You're being oblique," said Amanda. "What do you mean?"

"I mean don't you worry people will think you are in some runners' clique and that the dean favors runners?" Tony was trying to push Amanda's buttons.

"A little," she honestly answered.

"Really?" Tony was slightly surprised that the button he pushed had opened a door.

"Yes. But, running is open to anyone who wants to run. At the start of every year, one of the runners in the college sends out an email to everyone in the college asking if they want to be on a runners' email list and then he keeps those who respond informed about when we're running, where, and how far."

"Sure, running's open," said Tony, "but non-runners can't participate. Aren't they excluded?"

"Well, not excluded, but you're right. So, we try not to talk about school *too* much. And, I try and do other things that can and do include other people." Amanda said.

"Noble of you," sneered Tony.

"Don't rub it in. It does bother me a bit. But, the running is important enough to me and the group does engender a sense of community for some folks who value it. So, I do it."

"And," Tony correctly noted, "you really value it."

"I do," said Amanda. "You know my first year as dean I decided I probably had to cut back on my long runs and shouldn't plan on running a marathon that year. Then, a colleague of mine and I found ourselves on slightly different sides of an issue. After we talked it through and voted, I don't think we still quite agreed. It was okay but, you know there wasn't what I'd call total consensus."

"And this has what to do with running?" Tony wondered.

"Well, one evening after the vote, she called me up on the phone. She's a runner. And she asked me if I wanted to go for a run. I'd say it was in early December of my first year as dean and, up to then, I'd been pretty much running alone. In any event, she called and we went for about a five mile run. During the run, we decided to do a marathon together. And, we've been the best of friends since."

"So?" Tony asked.

"So?" Amanda requested.

"Running!"

"You got it," said Amanda. "And now I've got to go run. See ya!"

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3. Lee C. Bollinger, *I'm a Runner*, RUNNER'S WORLD, Aug. 2004, at 108 (interviewed by Susan Pocharski).