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Joseph R. Crowley - A Tribute

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JOSEPH R. CROWLEY—A TRIBUTE*

*John D. Feerick***

JOE Crowley exemplified the best of Fordham Law School. When he died on December 3d, we lost one of the greatest human beings ever to be associated with the School. It is not possible to express the depth of the loss felt by his colleagues and his past and present students. The numerous letters and expressions of sympathy received by us since his passing bear witness to the nobility of his life, the magnitude of his impact on the lives of others, and the affection and love felt for him throughout the Law School. He was a wonderful member of our community who every day gave meaning to the words dignity, honor and integrity.

Joe Crowley occupied many positions of honor and responsibility during his lifetime. He was an intelligence officer during World War II; a director of corporate labor relations; a law secretary to a distinguished federal judge; a litigating attorney with a prestigious law firm; a founding member of the New York State Public Employment Relations Board; a court-appointed bankruptcy trustee of a major corporation; a mediator and arbitrator par excellence of public and private disputes; a lecturer at conferences throughout the world; a leader of his political party; a trustee of St. Joseph's Seminary; and, most importantly to him, a law professor. He was constantly asked to serve in positions requiring integrity, fairness and ability. There was no one in whom people could more easily place their trust and confidence than Joe.

A recounting of his achievements falls far short of describing the Joe Crowley whom we knew at Fordham Law School. He excelled as a teacher and administrator but he was more than that to us. He was the heart of our community—compassionate, sensitive, gentle, always extending a helping hand to others. He was sought out by everyone for assistance, whether it was concerned with a school issue, a personal matter or a problem of everyday living. He had a vast store of knowledge and experience, and brought to every situation incomparable counsel, wisdom, judgment and a wide perspective. There was no task too burdensome nor problem too difficult for him. In his relationships he never hesitated to do good or show kindness.

There are too many instances of his generosity to recount here, but I would like to acknowledge my own enormous debt for the assistance he gave me when I was his student, then a practicing attorney, and finally his colleague. Whatever accomplishments are associated with my dean-

* Eulogy delivered January 9, 1986, at St. Paul the Apostle Roman Catholic Church.

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ship are mainly attributable to his quiet, guiding hand. I will deeply miss his friendship.

As a teacher, Joe enjoyed extreme popularity. His knowledge of the subjects he taught was complete and his love and enthusiasm for teaching were infectious. He brought a missionary zeal to the classroom along with good humor, wit and a deep affection for his students. He believed every word he spoke about the dignity of human labor and the rights and responsibilities of workers. Joe's classes always were over-subscribed and his booming description of students as "my brothers and sisters" was reciprocated by their deep affection for him.

His interest in students extended far beyond the classroom. He helped students find legal positions and many of those students returned the favor by passing on to him opportunities for other students. It has been said that his office served as both a confessional and employment agency for his devoted students. Joe helped not only students in need of employment assistance but also graduates seeking a job change.

Students also came to learn that after graduation they could call on him for advice in connection with their professional work. He would explain, with a twinkle in his eye, that a student's tuition included at least three free consultations after graduation! I know from my own experience as a former student of his that these consultations could number in the hundreds. He never hesitated to give of himself when a person was in need of help, especially if that person were a Fordham graduate. I recall his mentioning an occasion when a now famous Republican officeholder came to him for political assistance shortly after he had graduated from the Law School. Joe, staunch Democrat that he was, said he could not assist a member of the other party but that he would, however, help him in his capacity as a former student.

Joe was exceedingly proud of the labor law curriculum that he developed at Fordham Law School and which earned a national reputation for the School. He recalled often in conversations with me his early days of teaching when a professor was expected to be available to teach a variety of courses in the curriculum. And Joe did. He taught courses in Damages, Remedies, Suretyship and New York Practice, as well as every imaginable subject in the field of labor law.

Joe also was an excellent administrator as the School's first associate dean. He monitored the academic side of the School, coordinating the work of the many faculty committees that govern the School, serving as a catalyst for a number of new programs and courses, and helping colleagues with their teaching and scholarship endeavors. He was particularly sensitive to the adjustment challenges of new teachers and would go out of his way to help them. Joe played a significant role in the recent expansion of the School's physical plant, pushing the contractor and architects to meet their deadlines, inspecting the results of their work, showing them how they could do an even better job, and assisting with

the necessary fund raising. There was not an area of law school life that he did not touch or improve.

No recounting of his role in teaching and the development of Fordham Law School would be complete without mention of his wife, Mary, his children, Paul, Susan and Cathy, his grandson, Christopher, and his parents. He spoke often and lovingly of his family, particularly the support his wife, Mary, and their children gave him throughout his career. He was fond of telling me that when he considered leaving the practice of law to teach, he gathered his family around a kitchen table and asked for their views, pointing out that he would never be able to accumulate any wealth as a teacher. His family wanted him to do whatever made him happy. Fordham Law School was to benefit abundantly from that collective decision.

Although no part of our School bears Joe's name, his legacy is everywhere. It is a legacy of love and duty and laughter and hope for the future. We are better and stronger because of him. Although it is hard to contemplate the School which he served so unselfishly for twenty-eight years without him, he will forever be in our affectionate remembrances. I wish to quote one such remembrance, that of Joe's long time colleague, Professor Robert Byrn, who said:

Joe and I taught the same course to different sections for several years. From time to time, I would ask him how far along he was. He was always ahead of me. I never caught up with Joe. At Fordham, he taught law to students, pedagogy to professors, friendship to acquaintances, tolerance to cynics, and laughter to Scrooges. In all these things, he left me far behind. The plodding pupil never catches up with the accomplished master. But at least he had me running in the right direction and I am sustained now by Crowley's Law of Inertia: 'Once set in motion, even a law professor continues in motion.' I will never catch up, but I am better for the chase. I think we all are. I know our School is.

May God bless Joe as he blessed us.