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MY FRIEND, JOE CROWLEY

*William Hughes Mulligan**

JOE Crowley and I were close friends for over fifty years, and yet it was not until his death that I fully appreciated his virtues and how fortunate I was to have him as a friend and colleague. I never attended a dinner or any kind of testimonial that was given in his honor. He was completely self effacing, and managed to sublimate his own ambitions and aspirations for the sake of others. He always seemed content to remain in the background and advance the cause of his friends. In the legal profession this is indeed a rare characteristic, probably looked upon askance by those whose life is devoted to their own preferment. But Joe was living the true Christian life—love of God and neighbor came first. Joe's neighbors were not simply his wife and family but every student who ever set foot in Fordham Law School, even if he were the last man in his class or in fact had flunked out. The more hopeless the case, the greater champion of the cause was Joe. It was not easy to be a Dean when he was the advocate of the student who was in academic difficulties—Joe always said the student involved is a "good person." Even if he weren't, Joe would be at his side.

A great deal of this goes back to Joe's initial vocation to the priesthood. I first met him in 1931 when we both entered the Minor Seminary Cathedral Preparatory School and became fast friends. After four years I discovered that I did not have a vocation and left to go to Fordham College. It took Joe three more years to make a similar decision and he joined me in senior year at Rose Hill. At the end of the year Joe had compiled an excellent scholastic record and typically had made a host of friends.

While I was in law school, Joe was working in the labor department at Todd Shipyards where he had his initial exposure to the laws in which he was to become an expert. During the war Joe was an intelligence officer in the Air Corps, and I was an enlisted man in the Counterintelligence Corps. When he married Mary Duffy in the Lady Chapel at St. Patrick's Cathedral, I was proud to be the best man. After the war Joe entered the Law School, and I was one of his teachers. It was a challenging assignment and he sometimes asked unanswerable questions, interspersing his inquiries with the Latin tags he delighted in so much. Joe's true values as a serious student of the law were concealed not only by his innate modesty but shielded as well by a robust and indeed at times outrageous sense of humor. Although I have tried to retell some of his antics, I find it impossible since you had to be there and understand him to fully appreciate his sense of the ridiculous.

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Joe kept people laughing from the time I met him until the end—my parents, my wife as well as my children and grandchildren all appreciated his humor.

When I became Dean of the Law School I knew that Joe Crowley not only possessed a top flight legal mind, but I knew as well that he had all of the instincts of a good teacher. He had been clerk to Judge Gregory Noonan in the Southern District of New York and later was a litigator in the Satterlee, Warfield firm. I persuaded him to leave practice and become a full-time teacher at Fordham Law School. It was probably the best thing I ever did for the school. Joe not only taught Labor Law and Remedies, but when John Finn died he volunteered to teach his New York Practice Course. He also started our Corporate Law Institute, which thrives and flourishes. He was totally devoted to the School, but I believe his greatest value was his devotion to the students. He was the pastor of the student flock—he shared and respected their confidences and left no stone unturned to assist them not only in their professional careers but their personal lives as well.

Joe had a wide variety of interests—he had a natural talent for foreign languages and what he didn't know he faked superbly; he was an amateur theologian but probably more knowledgeable than some alleged professionals. He was interested in traveling, particularly to Ireland, where he was widely known and fully appreciated. He was a Trustee of St. Joseph's Seminary where he had been a student and his advice was highly regarded by the Archdiocese.

The great crowds of students and alumni at his funeral mass at his home parish and at the memorial mass at St. Paul's were tribute not only to his professional achievement, but in greater measure to his personal virtue and selflessness. Fordham Law School has had great teachers and administrators in its history, but no person in my experience could match Joe's devotion to students. We mourn him and we pray for his family who sorely miss him, but what a great privilege to have known him so long and so well. God bless, Joe.