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SAMUEL PRINCE AS A TEACHER

HARRY M. LIGHTSEY, JR.*

It is no easy thing to put to pen one's memories of any person, particularly someone with whom there have been close associations. Such memories are too complex, woven from a myriad influences, compounded of gestures and expressions and conversations. The task becomes more difficult as the size of the man increases, for there is the temptation, which must be avoided, to think in terms of accomplishments rather than personality. And yet, it is not so formidable a responsibility to reminisce about the late Dean Samuel L. Prince, because, in spite of his recognized capacity and his remarkable achievements, he was, to me, primarily a man of personality and character. Here, again, the easy road of cataloguing a long list of his memorable qualities, such as wit, integrity, and self-assurance must be eschewed, for there is deeper thought to be applied when one comes to a discussion of the Dean.

I first came to know the Dean as a freshman in law school when he was completing the last year of his service to his profession in that capacity. It was a frightening year, such as I suppose all freshman law students must experience, when the uncertainty of the law is first encountered and a lifetime of illusions about objective justice are being stripped away. It was a time when there was a need for something fixed and certain to which the student might attach himself. Many of us found that steadiness in the attitude of the Dean toward the law. To him the law was alive and interesting even after all those many years of practice and teaching. It breathed and he respected it for this quality of lifelikeness, and from this he brought to his students a glimpse of the excitement of his profession. To us, also, he conveyed his sense of feeling for the dignity and integrity of the profession. I always supposed that the Dean yearned for that more leisurely time-past of the profession when scholarly interests were a continuing part of the practicing attorney's life and the pressures of the modern practice had not yet so limited the breadth of non-professional learning which was so much a part of the tradition of this "learned profession." From this whimsy we, too, came to respect the culture of the law.

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In the final analysis, it is not too difficult to express what I, as a student, regard as the supreme accomplishment of this fine man of the law. It was the sense of character which he possessed, so strongly that some of it could not help but rub off on everyone with whom he was in contact. A sense of character built upon a love of and awe for the legal profession, a blend of integrity and respect, an awareness of the dignity of the profession and its requirements of basic honesty.

I realize now that in speaking of the Dean herein, I have erroneously used the past tense, for the contributions which he made to his students are not past. They have become a continuing part of each of us whom he taught and thus, truly, comprise a memorial of life to this man who still lives, a little, in everyone of those he taught.

