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Tribute to Coleman Karesh

Robert McC. Figg

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COLEMAN KARESH

Coleman Karesh was a man of many parts. He practiced in Columbia for years before he entered upon his distinguished career as a teacher of the law in 1937. Actively interested in the cultural life of the community, he gratified a yearning for the stage by acting in Shakespearean plays. There are many today who have nostalgic memories of his Hamlet, Iago and Petruchio.

As a teacher Professor Karesh will always be a legendary figure in the history of the School of Law. Possessing the gift of bringing to life even the most prosaic of the areas of study in which he taught, he inspired his students to love them as he did. They shared with him the "enthusiasm of the lecture room," the contagious interest of companionship, ferment of genius in the creative moment, the partnership in the teacher's work, all qualities which Justice Holmes listed among the elements of great teaching.

He was truly "a scholar, and a ripe and good one; exceedingly wise; fairspoken and persuading." His scholarship was both precise and profound, and his teaching blended wit with wisdom.

During World War II a hard-pressed University called upon him to add to his load the teaching of undergraduate English and Spanish, and its appreciation of his excellence is reflected in the fact that he was the first recipient of the Russell Award for Distinguished Teaching in 1957, that he was invited to deliver the Guignard Lectures in 1961, that a chair in the law school was endowed in his name, and that the new law library is the Coleman Karesh Law Library.

As a member of the American Law Institute and as South Carolina's representative to the National Conference on Uniform State Laws he faithfully attended their annual meetings and participated in their discussions and deliberations.

Long after graduation his students, judges and lawyers alike, continued to seek his counsel as the authority in the fields that they had studied under him. It is fair to say that no man in our generation has had as much influence as he did upon our bench and bar.

During his more than a third of a century of service to the law school he was wont to say: "Deans may come and Deans may go, but I, like Old Man River, just go on forever." But his enforced retirement neared, and in 1969 he was honored at a testimonial

dinner given by some of his many students, friends and colleagues. Among the speakers were the Governor, the Chief Justice, the Chief Judge of the Fourth Circuit, and then U.S. District Judge Donald Russell, who had been his classmate at the University. Perhaps the most eloquent tribute came from a member of the Class of 1938:

With the first hour of instruction the Law Class of 1938 began a new love of the law coupled with a love of Professor Karesh as a man. His rare and gracious manner called ever for our best effort. We are fortunate, grateful, to have sat at his feet.

Coleman Karesh will live in the hearts of his students who received the impress of his reverence for the law and his loyalty to its principles. He will also live in the hearts of his colleagues and friends.

Robert McC. Figg