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Tribute: Robert I. Stevenson

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ROBERT I. STEVENSON

B.J. Brabham*

Professor Robert I. Stevenson must retire from teaching after this academic year. Students and faculty here at the University of Richmond Law School are saddened by the prospect. Many have gone to him personally, urging him to stay on for just one more year (hoping, without doubt, to see that "one more year" stretch into many more years). All have come away disappointed. Bob Stevenson believes that mandatory retirement, at least in this profession, is a good thing. He has seen too many excellent teachers, judges, and the like, continue on the job long after their excellence has vanished. And they are, of course, the last to recognize this loss; Professor Stevenson wants none of this sort of thing.

Well, Bob Stevenson leaves us while still at his best. He is today as healthy, as full of good spirits and humor, and as mentally vigorous as he was when I first met him more than ten years ago when I took a faculty position at the University of Idaho. It was not long before I found that he was easily one of the most dedicated, hard working teachers it had been my pleasure to meet.

He made copious notes for every class (for example, *three* large notebooks for contracts alone), all filled with the latest cases, articles, questions, and anecdotes, and all certain to stimulate, delight, and enlighten his students. And these notes he revised and updated every summer, a practice he still employs. What is more, he has for many years used his own materials for his Products Liability and Commercial Paper courses. These, too, he revises every other year or so. This, I submit, is dedication. His students have always received the very best from Professor Stevenson.

As I was to discover as our friendship grew in Idaho, he brought more into the classroom than this intense preparation. His background before he came into teaching was rich and varied. He received his B.A. and LL.B. degrees from Yale, the latter in 1937. The Yale faculty during that time was indeed an extraordinary one. Thurman Arnold, William O. Douglas, and Arthur Corbin, among other luminaries were teaching there. As he says, Professor Stevenson had the great good fortune to have taken

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courses under many of them.

From the Yale Law School, where he worked on the Law Journal in his last two years, Professor Stevenson moved to New York. There he was an associate in two different firms from 1937 to 1951—Brown, Wood, Ivey, Mitchell & Petty, and Blair & Ogden. In 1952 he became assistant corporate counsel for United Technologies, where he remained until 1955. He moved from there to the Ford Motor Company where he was senior attorney in the Office of General Counsel.

In 1960 he foresook the active practice of law to become the Director of Alumni Relations and Registrar at Yale. He remained there until 1965 and then lectured for a year at the University of Connecticut Law School. The following year he became a full-time teacher at Idaho.

I moved to the University of Richmond in 1973. I believe the best service I have performed for the school was convincing Robert I. Stevenson to come here in 1974. By most standards, he has been here a rather short time. Still, it has been time enough for that richness of background and spirit of dedication to have had their lasting effect on students, alumni and faculty.

We are sorry to see you go, Bob. We will miss you.