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REMEMBERING A.L. PHILPOTT

*The Honorable Gerald L. Baliles**

The University of Richmond Law Review's dedication of its *1992 Annual Survey of Virginia Law* to the late A.L. Philpott, Speaker of the House of Delegates, is a thoughtful and fitting tribute to a T.C. Williams alumnus and dear friend of the University, and a distinguished public leader in the life of the Commonwealth.

It is difficult for us to contemplate the future of the Commonwealth without A.L. Philpott, for he was such a large part of its vital force for decades. The extent of our loss is difficult to measure and yet has been felt already.

Because his agenda was focused, his accomplishments were considerable. His integrity was unquestioned and his friendship was deep.

Much has been said about the Speaker since his death. I share those sentiments, for I knew A.L. personally, as well as professionally and politically.

He was a friend from my early days in Patrick County when he fished for trout in neighboring streams.

He was a professional colleague, and we delighted in debating each other over some fine points of law under consideration for change by the Virginia Code Commission.

He was a political friend and supporter always, even when we didn't see eye to eye on the issue. One example: my first bill as a freshman legislator in 1976 was the right turn on red proposal, a bill that had been killed routinely for almost a decade. Even though he did not support the bill, he helped me count noses on the House Roads Committee. When the full House approved the measure, he scowled across the chamber from the direction of the Majority Leader's seat, then cast a sidelong glance and a knowing grin in my direction. I never forgot that.

Over the years our mutual interest in books, especially history, created private opportunities for reflection. Whether in the quiet moments of conversation in the Executive Mansion in Richmond or in the cozy den of his home in Bassett, it was clear to me that

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he understood — even if he didn't always like — the forces of change sweeping the world, as well as the Commonwealth, and agreed that our challenge is to anticipate change where possible and shape it through individual action and collective responses within a framework of constitutional principles. Those were treasured moments.

In short, the Speaker possessed the stuff of which legends are made, and all of us who worked with him will miss the man as much as his leadership.