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ON THE PASSING OF A.L. PHILPOTT

*The Honorable Theodore V. Morrison, Jr.**

With the passing of Albert Lee Philpott last year I lost my mentor, constant friend, and the source of the greatest influence on my service in public office.

The twenty years I served in the House of Delegates would have been substantially shortened had it had not been for A.L.'s inspiration, which caused me to continue in office much longer than I had intended. I would not hold my present position had he not encouraged me to "come back to Richmond."

Although I felt that my service fell dismally short of the high standard of performance he set for others in government, I am certain that the quality of my service was largely the product of his influence. Indeed, the example he set for others was among the most valuable of his contributions, and is sorely missed today.

This brief piece cannot do justice to what he has left for us. For those interested in the law it should be noted that were it not for the late Speaker our state constitution, the judicial system, the legislative process, and our codified civil and criminal laws would all be quite different from what they are today, and most assuredly not as fair and effective.

To his core he was a lawyer, and it was his passion for the law, its practice and administration, that accounted for his service on such bodies as the Virginia Code Commission, the Committee on District Courts, the State Crime Commission, and the Courts of Justice Committee. I was granted the privilege to serve on these groups with him, and to have been his desk mate in the House chamber during the years he was its majority leader. It was the law that bonded our friendship.

During the last two decades of his life no other individual exerted a stronger degree of sustained influence on the public policy of Virginia. The truly remarkable thing is that his influence existed without benefit of a Philpott-controlled political organization or a sizable slush fund to dole out to others. It existed because of the respect of others for his intellect, legislative skill, and integrity of principle.

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We, and those who follow us, deserve a complete record of his life and the lasting legacies bequeathed us by our departed friend. My hope is that his biographer will set to work soon, but the task will not be an easy one. A.L. was not one to produce much in the way of written records. With his mind he had little need for them. He had no thought of enshrining his memory by compiling his "papers" as do governors and presidents. He expected no public accolades, felt uncomfortable when receiving them and considered public service to be its own reward.

Measured by the sheer volume, importance, and quality of his contributions to the public good, we have lost one of the greatest Virginians of this or any other age.