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In Memoriam: Robert E. Shepherd, Jr.

John G. Douglass

University of Richmond School of Law

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IN MEMORIAM ROBERT E. SHEPHERD, JR.

*John G. Douglass **

This *Annual Survey* issue is dedicated to the memory of Bob Shepherd. Bob was a beloved teacher, mentor, and friend. He joined our faculty in 1978. While he officially “retired” in 2001, in fact he continued to teach on a regular basis even into the last few weeks of his life.

To Bob, the opportunity to shape the practice of law and the making of law was central to his calling as a law professor. In an interview last year Bob said it this way: “I believe I’ve been blessed in a way by being allowed to teach and be a member of a faculty that gives me freedom and perhaps the credibility to affect public policy. And I feel like I need to give that back to society.” Bob gave back in countless ways.

Across four decades Bob focused his considerable intellect and his boundless energy on issues of juvenile justice and protection of children. He was the principal architect of Virginia’s 1977 juvenile code and a major contributor to legislation on special education and on child abuse and neglect. Bob’s resonant voice filled the halls of Virginia’s General Assembly whenever bills relating to children were up for debate. It is fair to say that no major piece of juvenile justice legislation passed through the General Assembly in the last thirty years without Bob weighing in on the side of children’s rights. He won some and he lost some, but his voice always commanded respect. He made a difference for children.

* Dean and Professor of Law, University of Richmond School of Law. J.D., 1980, Harvard Law School; B.A., 1977, Dartmouth College.

Bob's broad smile and ready laughter were mainstays at bar conventions, judicial conferences, and committee meetings whenever juvenile justice was the topic. At various times in his career Bob chaired both the American Bar Association's Juvenile Justice Committee and the Virginia Bar Association's Committee on the Needs of Children. In 1999 he became the first person inducted into the Virginia Juvenile Court Hall of Fame, a tribute that aptly marks his place in the history of child advocacy in our Commonwealth.

Bob was devoted to our law school. He was an early proponent of clinical education. He planted the seeds that grew into our Children's Law Center which now features clinical programs in juvenile justice, education and disabilities law, family law, and legislative advocacy. He was a founder of our National Center for Family Law. To honor his many contributions to our law school, Bob's colleagues, students, and friends established a scholarship in his name to support future students who pursue studies in family law and juvenile justice. In the months following his death, the law school honored Bob with its highest award, the William Green Award for Professional Excellence, the first time the award has been bestowed on a member of our faculty.

Many who read this *Annual Survey* will remember Bob first and foremost as a teacher. His former students include hundreds of skilled practitioners who carry his lessons into courtrooms and conference rooms on a daily basis. They include a growing number of judges across Virginia's Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts. Among Bob's former students are more than a handful of state legislators, some of whom, Bob once laughed, "I can count on to vote against me." As a teacher Bob's broadest and deepest legacy will remain the generation of students whom he mentored throughout his thirty-year career. With them he shared equal measures of his inquisitive spirit, his sense of fair play, and his deep human compassion for those most in need. In the skill and professionalism of those former students, in their devotion to clients, and in their commitment to justice, Bob's legacy is secure.