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ALBERT COATES AND LEGAL RESEARCH

RONALD C. LINK†

It is always fitting that the *North Carolina Law Review* include memorials to deceased faculty members, for the *Law Review* constitutes the most significant permanent record of the intellectual life of the Law School. It is particularly fitting that the *Law Review* recognize Albert Coates, for both the *Law Review* and the life of Albert Coates reflect a dedication to the proposition that rigorous legal research can lead to improvement of our system of laws and the administration of justice.

In many ways, Albert Coates reminded me of Augustus McCrae, the hero of Larry McMurry's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the American frontier, *Lonesome Dove*. On rereading the novel, I was fascinated to discover that McCrae was fond even of Albert's favorite exclamation: "Ay god." McMurry describes his hero as follows:

Call [McCrae's partner] knew there was no point in arguing. That was what Augustus wanted: argument. He didn't really care what the question was, and it made no great difference to him which side he was on. He just plain loved to argue, whereas Call hated to. Long experience had taught him that there was no winning arguments with Augustus, even in cases where there was a simple right and wrong at issue. . . .

But Gus loved to live and had no intention of letting anyone do him out of any of his pleasures. Call finally decided his coolness was just a by-product of his general vanity and overconfidence. Call himself spent plenty of time on self-appraisal. He knew what he could certainly do, and what he might do if he was lucky, and what he couldn't do barring a miracle. The problem with Gus was that he regarded himself as the miracle, in such situations. He treated danger with light contempt or open scorn

Surely it is more than coincidental that McMurry's description so well fits Albert Coates, for both Augustus McCrae and Albert Coates were American originals: pioneers, restless to break new trails, frustrated by hidebound traditions, rambunctious, garrulous, men of great vision, leaders.

And so I come to the point of this remembrance. Albert Coates was a pioneer who blazed many a new path. The story of his founding of the Institute of Government is well-known. Not so well-known, however, is another of Albert's creations, the Law Center at the University of North Carolina School of Law. I would like to make this permanent record of Albert's essential role in the creation of the Law Center, for it was he who obtained the essential continuing

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funding for the Law Center. The funding which supports the Center is equivalent to the income from a million dollar endowment. Currently the Law Center carries out its mission of research into the improvement of laws and the administration of justice by providing financial support for faculty research projects. Applications for support are reviewed by a Law Center Board appointed by the Dean and consisting of some of our most productive scholars. This kind of research support is essential to a major law school.

Ken Broun did many great things as Dean from 1979 through 1987. One of them was to rename the Law Center to the Albert Coates Law Center, in recognition of Albert's contributions to the Center. It was one of the happy graces of life that Ken was able to do this many months before Albert's death. Ken informed Albert of the Center's new title, and Albert was touched by it. We are trustees of Albert's legacy; if we can capture even a fraction of Albert's spirit and vision, the potential for the Albert Coates Law Center will be limitless.