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Henry Brandis Jr.

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MAURICE TAYLOR VAN HECKE

HENRY BRANDIS, JR.*

On December 5, 1963 for the first time in some four decades, death came for an active member of the faculty of this Law School. With its characteristic contempt for human priorities, it took the most distinguished member of that faculty, Maurice Taylor Van Hecke.

Our sense of shock and loss was great, indeed. It was not that he was called in the first prime of his life, for he had passed his seventy-first birthday. It was not that he was called without being given an adequate opportunity for fulfillment, for he had accomplished much more useful work than may be marked up to the credit of the average good and able man. It was not that he died before his work had been acknowledged, for deserved recognition had been accorded him by his church, his colleagues, his profession, his School, his University, his State, and his Nation.

But we of the faculty, seeing him so vigorous and so alert and so free of problems of health, always assumed that he would certainly teach until June 1965 and then be with us for an indefinite period as warm friend, wise counsellor, and respected elder statesman. Until the day he died we had not been warned and did not believe that it would happen.

Maurice Van Hecke was one of my instructors when I was a law student—indeed, one of the very best I had in seven semesters at two law schools. He was my Dean when I joined this faculty. And he was my colleague on the faculty for almost twenty-four years, including more than fourteen years of my own service as Dean.

During those years of association, so personally and professionally profitable for me, I welcomed the opportunities I had to write about him. I wrote about him happily because he was a man upon whom I could heap the highest praise without the slightest danger of prejudicing my own integrity or of inflating his ego beyond its naturally modest proportions. But now, with the memory of his death painfully fresh, I find writing about him to be very diffi-

* Dean, School of Law, University of North Carolina.

cult. I must do so only briefly and very simply, or I could not do it at all.

Even if I desired to write about them, I am not the one to attempt a definitive appraisal of his scholarly books and articles; his many services, including a term as President, to the Association of American Law Schools; his Kenan Professorship and Thomas Jefferson Award; and his varied and valuable contributions, in countless official and unofficial capacities, to state and national governments. I can attempt only to express what he meant to me and his other colleagues—and, so remarkable was his character, that I gravely doubt that it is possible for me to describe his impact with fidelity.

He was a great teacher. He was a productive and profound scholar, at once both meticulous and imaginative. He was the principal founder of the *Law Review*. As faculty member and Dean, he, perhaps more than any other single individual, helped to create the present Law School, striving always to strengthen its standards, to improve its performance, to keep it abreast of worthwhile new trends, and to send forth its graduates prepared to fill an able, thoughtful and honorable role in the legal profession.

However, to his colleagues, there was one further thing which typified him and leaves them richer for having known him. He was self-effacing in their interest; while never provoking them with unsought advice, he was forever available when advice was sought—and unfailingly helpful; and he found much joy in any successes they might have. Beyond even this, the example he set of unflagging devotion to the welfare of the School was an inspiration to all of us—an inspiration which, most fortunately, he left behind him as a still living force.

Of all the many law teachers I have known, Maurice Van Hecke is the one I wish I could have been.