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MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR
HENRY P. BRANDIS, JR.
FEBRUARY 26, 1989

DICKSON PHILLIPS, JR.

It is fitting that we have gathered here in the heart of the campus of the first state university to honor the memory of a good man, a noble son and servant of that university and of the state which founded and nurtured it.

Henry Brandis was my teacher in law school, he brought me on its faculty and served as my dean until I succeeded him at the end of his great fifteen-year tenure in that office. He then occupied that most sensitive position—predecessor to the dean in office—as member of the law faculty until his retirement. Those relationships and the friendship that grew and developed during their course provide many opportunities for fond remembrances and respectful tribute to a man for whom fondness and respect grew steadily over the years. I am sure that others will deal with specific aspects of his deanship, with his scholarly work, with his public service during those years. I want to share some more general reflections on two aspects of his life which—as I pondered my part here today—came to dominate my appreciation for his life as I shared and experienced it. These are his role in the life of the university at large—and his unique and powerful persona.

First—the university man.

Endowed with great powers of intellect—as formidable and wide-ranging as any I have directly encountered—equally great powers of heart and spirit, and a superb legal education, Henry Brandis at the outset of his career could have chosen whatever stage, however wide, he wanted and excelled upon it. The choice came fairly quickly. He returned home from New York, where he'd concluded his legal studies at Columbia, to North Carolina and to Chapel Hill, his undergraduate alma mater. For the rest of a long life he devoted his talents exclusively to public service to the state of his birth and to the University. In so doing, he joined that great company of fellow North Carolinians of extraordinary ability who from the University's founding have thought it an altogether worthy use of their talents to commit them exclusively to her service, happily eschewing what by the world's standards might be thought wider opportunities. In this great company of native sons and daughters—indispensable leaven in a university steadily becoming more national over the years—the Grahams and Aycocks and others, many here today, too numerous to name—Henry Brandis stood out for upwards of fifty years as the powerful conscience of the University in times of trouble and as the constant exemplar, in good times and bad, of steady, selfeffacing devotion to duty as teacher, scholar and administrator. He came literally to be a rock upon which successive administrations knew they could rely—and did rely—for hard, honest judgments, and for steadfast support

in maintaining unpopular positions that he knew were right. This of course is not to suggest that he was ever simply a company man—my University right or wrong. More a Samuel or Nathan come to judgment on the powers that be, as not a few officials both within and without the University came to know over the years.

Which brings me to the more sensitive personal side of things. Inevitably, there was complexity. The hallmark was of course the power and force of his personality. I never saw him—nor can I imagine him—intimidated by another person. But I never saw him use another person to his personal advantage, nor even to secure some supposed advantage for a higher public interest.

His convictions, inevitably, were deeply held and his confidence in those convictions profound. In consequence, he did not always suffer fools gladly. Even less gladly—as those who were here on campus in the troubled late 60s and early 70s may recall—did he suffer fools who suffered other fools gladly.

But this is not to suggest that the essence was harsh and judgmental. The essence was quite the opposite. It lay in the humane substance of the convictions he held so deeply—in the things he honored and those he abhorred. Here at the core, he had it eternally right. He honored the great religious insights, the bonds of family and friendship, justice and mercy and the law as it embodied them, intellectual rigor and honesty, moral and ethical integrity, the life of the inquiring mind, the beauties and mystery of the natural order, the marvelous ways of the educated person with language, the comical counterpoints to life's harshness—life itself.

He abhorred with a vengeance cant, hypocrisy, pomposity, false pride, mental sloppiness, injustice, prejudice, vulgarity in all its forms. He was not passive in these convictions. He lived them.

The state and the University he served are better for his service. We his friends are better for having had him as friend and counselor and model for the civilized life. His life counted deeply for good in both its public and personal aspects.

Vale, old friend.