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IN HONOR OF STEVEN P. FRANKINO

JOHN DOBBYN*

IT is a matter of intense personal honor and humility to be allowed to contribute my recollections of one whom I have no hesitation in calling a great man. To all the world, Steve was intelligent beyond our ability to quantify, learned as a result of a broad span of driving curiosities, and wise—how seldom we get to use that word in its true sense. To me, he was all of those things, but that was the minor part. He was my friend, deeply committed and deeply loving.

To state his accomplishments would be to go on *ad infinitum*. I'll select only the highlights, which in most peoples' lives would be extraordinary in themselves. Steve began his legal career with an A.B. degree from The Catholic University in 1959, and a J.D. degree from its School of Law in 1962. Having no uncertainty about the fact that his contribution would be in the area of educating others, Steve taught successively at The Catholic University School of Law, and then, fortunately for us, Villanova School of Law.

His interests led him to become a Research Professor in 1970 at the Institute of Comparative Law of the University of Florence, Italy. From there, he began a career for which his talents of leadership by gentle example suited him well. He became successively and successfully dean of Creighton University School of Law in Omaha, Nebraska, 1971-1977, Columbus School of Law of The Catholic University, 1979-1987 and finally Villanova School of Law, 1987-1997. During his tenure as dean at Catholic University, his fuller talents enabled him to serve as General Counsel of the University.

On retirement as Dean of the Villanova School of Law, Steve returned to his first love as a deeply admired, and in fact, as I hear from the students, beloved professor of the subjects dearest to his heart, Law and Religion in a Pluralistic Society and Catholic Social Teaching and the Law.

Along the way, Steve's talents were tapped as consultant to such diverse institutions as the Archdiocese of Miami and St. Thomas University, the Mississippi Baptist Convention and Mississippi College and the Diocese of Ponce and the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico. He also served at the very highest levels of the Accreditation Committee of the Section of Legal Education and Admission to the Bar of the American Bar Association.

When the American Bar Association instituted its Central and Eastern European Law Initiative to help bring about fundamental legal reform in

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the wake of the communist regime, Steve again was active in making a valued contribution.

Among the many honors that punctuated his varied services, I believe that Steve was most proud of being inducted as a Knight of Malta.

These, again, are merely the highlights. And to the world, as to me, they are certainly impressive. But there was so much more to the man. None of these titles can convey the sparkle of enthusiasm that lit his eyes when he discussed any of his many intense interests. There was the deep sense of personal caring that was written on his face whenever anyone came to him with a concern. There were no boundaries of time or limits on his full attention to every one of us who felt the need of his ear. And that's fine, but beyond that there was the gift of wisdom that enabled him to see us leave his office far more often than not with confidence in the solution he had led us to.

On the personal side, my wife and I were privileged to be the beneficiary of Steve's talent and enthusiasm for the art of fine entertaining—good food (personally prepared), good wine (personally selected) and engrossing story-telling that could go on until the morning sun was making an appearance.

And that too was a unique gift—but still not the best. The very best part of Steve from my personal perspective was the bottomless depth of character that made Steve a “friend” in the utmost sense of that word. His capacity for love was such that I truly believe there was literally no request within his power that I could make of Steve that he would not have granted—and volunteered if he were aware of the need. In this, I was not unique. This same friendship went out to the amazingly wide circle of people in his world. And every one of us is warmed by the fact that our own lights glow so much brighter for having been granted the blessing of basking in the light of his love.

We miss him. But we do so with the certainty that his and our Savior will bring us together to continue those lively conversations that have been merely temporarily interrupted.