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# In Memoriam: John George Stephenson, III

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# Villanova Law Review

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## In Memoriam

JOHN GEORGE STEPHENSON, III  
1908 — 1972

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To

JOHN GEORGE STEPHENSON, III  
*the Board of Editors of*  
THE VILLANOVA LAW REVIEW  
*humbly dedicate this volume.*

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JOHN GEORGE STEPHENSON, III — 1908-1972

In a very poignant sense the untimely death of my longtime colleague, Professor John Stephenson, marks the end of an era — a very happy and a very fruitful era. Now all that brave little company of six who constituted the founding faculty of the School of Law at Villanova have passed from the Villanova scene. Two have died, three have continued in legal education at other stations, one has returned to the active practice.

When I left the deanship only a few months ago, I derived much pleasure in the prospect of John Stephenson's continuing for a time at Villanova. I do not exaggerate when I characterize the original faculty as a brave little company. What a dedicated and enthusiastic group they were. And no one was more enthusiastic, dedicated, and loyal to the ideal we all shared in those exciting days than John Stephenson.

I first met John during World War II when I was a student at the Judge Advocate General's School quartered in the beautiful Law Quadrangle of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. John Stephenson was a member of the teaching faculty. I had at the time come into the military service after serving some eight years as a

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Professor of Law at Georgetown. I had served long enough to have some appreciation of what makes a good law teacher. John impressed me immediately and indelibly, as a truly fine candidate for law teaching once the War should end. I like to think that I was somewhat instrumental in persuading John to embrace law teaching. I remember a day early in 1946 when he came into my office in the Pentagon to tell me that he was about to be separated from the military service. I asked him to what he proposed to dedicate his talents in the days ahead. He told me of several possible career choices, but law teaching was not then in his mind. I urged him to seriously consider law school teaching. He seemed surprised at the suggestion, but he followed it and the Fall of 1946 found him as a faculty member at the University of Miami School of Law. I felt rewarded indeed because I knew that John had found his niche.

During the years between 1946 and 1953, I met John at meetings of the Association of American Law Schools and in stimulating conversations with him, I always learned about the problems of legal education, both immediate and long range. When I was invited to inaugurate the School of Law at Villanova in 1953, the very first man I invited to join the founding faculty was John Stephenson. During the academic year, 1952-53, he was a Sterling Fellow at Yale. I made a most fruitful trip to New England in the spring of 1953. I remember so well my visit to the Stephensons in New Haven. I met Mrs. Stephenson for the first time. It was apparent that both John and his wife, Elizabeth, appreciated what I was about to attempt at Villanova, and I soon realized that the Stephensons could and would help insure the success of our venture. We sealed the bargain and I left New Haven in a genuinely happy frame of mind for Cambridge to seal another bargain with Arthur Clement Pulling of revered memory. The result of that bargain between John Stephenson and me was the finest possible friendship two colleagues in an exciting adventure could possibly have. And now that friendship is interrupted for a time until, hopefully, we meet again upon distant shores. I can only be grateful for nearly twenty years of devoted friendship and devoted service. The expression of my gratitude is the more poignant inasmuch as I have just opened the June 1972 issue of the *Villanova Law Review* and now realize that the last printed words to come from John's pen were in appreciation of me as his colleague.

John Stephenson was both a gentleman and a gentle man. At times, John's gentility was mistaken for subservience. I can testify to the marked independence of thought which was a hallmark of his moral and intellectual makeup. Some of my finest hours at Villanova

were those spent in quiet conversation with John in sessions calculated to persuade. He was effective and persuasive, but he did not shout, shove, or push. Honesty and courage were his beyond measure and his honesty and courage were nicely blended with intelligence, learning, and grace. Compromise with his ideals was virtually impossible for him.

Others, I know, will pay tribute to John Stephenson as scholar and teacher. I, too, fully appreciate him as scholar and teacher, but I shall miss him most not as a fellow teacher gone from the scene, but for the man and the friend that he was. The many kindnesses and the wise counsel which he gave to generations of students will be remembered by those students with enduring gratitude and affection. He did not openly identify with wholesale social reform. In fact, he was both skeptical and wary of large scale social and economic overhaul. John Stephenson was a patrician (he liked to refer to me as a populist from the Midwest) but he could identify with the individual who was troubled and who needed help and encouragement. Only a day or so after his death, account was taken of this trait of Professor Stephenson's in the public press. So often individual alumni of the School of Law spoke to me of the unheralded but very real help they had received from him while students.

John Stephenson touched all his efforts with love. His devotion to his family and their devotion to him was always apparent and edifying. His love of Villanova he proved in so many ways over so many years. In turn, he was a man to be loved. I loved him dearly and I am profoundly grateful that his life touched mine to my spiritual profit and my delight.

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,  
All losses are restored and sorrows end.

—Shakespeare, Sonnet XXX

HAROLD GILL REUSCHLEIN\*

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