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In Memoriam: John J. Murphy

HON. LAWRENCE H. COOKE*

John J. Murphy was a man of contrast— lofty in station, humble in self-evaluation. And with his passing, his family lost devotion, his law school leadership, the bar inspiration and earthly life saintliness.

His half-century was golden in accomplishment. In the front ranks of his class at St. Joseph's Seminary and College, he went on to St. John's Law School to be an excellent student and a finalist in moot court competition. After a five year association with a law firm, it was his to return to St. John's and distinguish himself with preeminent lectures in Torts and Family Law. He became Dean in 1970 and, during his tenure, the physical plant moved to the Queens campus and St. John's Law School rose to new heights of legal scholarship and public acclaim.

His unselfishness was reflected in the breadth of his interests. In the public sector he served as Special Counsel of the Board of Education of the City of New York, Appellate Hearing Officer in disciplinary proceedings for the State Judicial Conference, Special Counsel for the Joint Legislative Committee on Transportation, Reporter for the Speedy Trial Committee of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, and a member of a Public Employment Relations Board. His professional and communal concerns were vented in areas such as the Board of Directors of the Bedford Stuyvesant Legal Services Corporation, the Board of Trustees of the Industrial Home for the Blind and the Executive Committee of the Joint Conference on Legal Education. His moral and religious awareness was evident in efforts for the St. Thomas More Institute for Legal Research, the Bishop's Committee for Catholic Charities in the Rockville Centre Diocese, the Task Force on Health of the New York Archdiocese, and the Medical, Moral and Ethics Board of the Archdiocese.

This litany of activity is indicative but falls short of adequate portrayal. It fails to capture the "real" Dean Murphy or pinpoint the puissance which magnetized others toward him. John J. Mur-

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phy was every bit the proverbial man four square— an embodiment of integrity and intelligence who moved with courage and perseverance. To these strengths were admixed his more tender virtues of compassion and respect. Then there was wit and warmth, a fondness for music, an optimistic perspective, and a love of Irish heritage.

From experience, I became aware that Dean Murphy knew his students well and followed their course long after they left his tutelage. He was proud of their accomplishments and, indeed, had the right to realize that his St. John's Law progeny had enriched the legal profession immeasurably.

Dean Murphy was able to keep his head when others were losing theirs; he was able to walk with kings and never lose the common touch. The Empire State has lost a towering legal figure. Today and tomorrow still, we bow our heads in sorrow, but fondly reminisce with pleasurable memories.

Let us emulate his virtues,
that they too of us might say:

“The world is better and brighter
because John Murphy passed this way.”