

## Memorial Tribute to Dean John J. Murphy

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**Memorial Tribute  
to  
Dean John J. Murphy**

HON. EDWARD D. RE\*

It is fitting that a Memorial to honor the memory of Dean John J. Murphy appear in a volume of the *Law Review* of the School he served so well. To be asked to participate in this special issue is both a privilege and a deeply felt responsibility.

To write of a departed dear friend and colleague is a most difficult assignment; one that can only be undertaken with humility and heartfelt sadness. I choose to believe that I have been chosen for this privilege only because of my deep esteem for the man. John Murphy, for me, was not merely another member of the faculty; he was a close personal friend, an exemplary former student, a distinguished member of the faculty, as well as the Dean of the School of Law.

In a sense, no tribute to John J. Murphy, husband, father, lawyer, professor, scholar, and law school dean, can be adequate. Nor is it easy to write of a man, who, it seems, only yesterday was among us as a vital, dynamic, smiling, and energetic man. Only because that vitality and energy touched the lives of so many so poignantly, and enriched them all with his endearing qualities, can an attempt be made to capture a glimpse of the noble spirit that moved this special human being.

Dean Murphy began his career at St. John's University School of Law in 1953 following his graduation from St. Joseph's Seminary and College. His excellence at the Law School was demonstrated not only by his academic standing, but also by the fact that he was a finalist in the National Moot Court Competition. After receiving his Juris Doctor from St. John's in 1956, he became associated with the law firm of Goodwin, Savage, Clare and Whitehead. Five years later he became Assistant Dean of the Law School, and in 1970 was named Dean.

To anyone who knew him, John Murphy was totally dedicated to the goals of St. John's and its founding spirit, Bishop John Loughlin of Brooklyn, who in 1870 commissioned that a college be

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established for the "solid education and moral training" of its students. Throughout the twenty years of his association in the administration of the School of Law and his student days before, John Murphy was a model of the highest standards of integrity and professionalism to which all members of the legal profession should aspire.

In assuming his duties as Dean in 1970, upon the 100th anniversary of the University, with the characteristic indefatigable style that marked all his endeavors, he rededicated the School of Law to the intellectual excellence and moral growth of all of its students. Under his leadership, in the decade that followed and until the very end of his earthly life, the School of Law rose to new heights in the tradition of his predecessors, Deans George W. Metheson, Rev. John T. Tinnelly, Rev. William Cahill, and Harold F. McNiece.

As one of the five Deans who have distinguished themselves at the helm of the School of Law since its founding, John Murphy was acknowledged by the Law School faculty as "an untiring administrator and legal scholar who placed the welfare of the students, faculty and alumni of the Law School above all other concerns," and who, "despite the painful, enervating illness which seized him in the summer of 1979, performed his decanal duties to the end."

Throughout his administration, as well as his legal career as practicing lawyer, professor, and public servant in both civic and ecclesiastical activities, John Murphy inspired all who knew him. He inspired not only by his commitment and conviction, but by his deeds as well. All who passed his way were not only imbued by his humility, but were also moved by his warmth, kindness, and friendship.

His was a rewarding career as an educator; a life of commitment and dedication to the formation of the minds and hearts and values of those who were to have an impact on society. His was also an exemplary life of service to God, country, and family. In the words of the Honorable Hugh L. Carey, Governor of the State of New York, "His monuments will be the many thousands of students who will give their lives to love of the law— as he gave his."

The deep sense of loyalty which Dean Murphy lived throughout his academic life was appropriately rewarded by St. John's by the bestowal of the President's Medal as a "symbol of the University's high esteem for his dedication and contributions to the ideals

of St. John's." As one of the past persons to present him with one of the many honors that filled his brief life, on the occasion of the *Pinckney Award* bestowed upon him by the New York Defense Association, I shall always remember the warmth of this gracious man. Perhaps my thoughts, then as well as now, can best be summarized by a paragraph of the School of Law Faculty Memorial Resolution passed shortly after his death:

Although this faculty, collectively and individually, mourns his tragic and early passing, it would be inappropriate to close this memorial on a note of sadness. Dean Murphy was a man of good cheer and optimism, two hallmarks of the Christian faith to which he was so steadfastly dedicated. His love of Irish music and humor typified a personality that stressed the joyful side of life. We shall never relinquish the fond memories we have of the happiness he brought to our association with him.

Beyond academic achievement and professional accomplishment there is always the man - the beloved husband, devoted brother, and loving father. John Murphy, of course, will be missed most by his beloved wife, Ann, his wonderful sons, Tom and Paul, and his brother, Reverend Thomas F. Murphy. We, his friends, mourn his loss; but we cherish deeply his enrichment of our lives.