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A STUDENT LOOKS BACK

RICHARD B. KNIGHT*

Beatrice Rasco once confided that her husband loved his students as much as he did his children. And you would have to say that she was right if you were one of the thousands who knew Russell Rasco as a dean and as a professor. In fact, you could safely bet that he spent more time with students than with his children during his thirty-one years at the University of Miami.

Since this is true, it means that everyone who knew him has his own ideas about who and what Dean Rasco really was. To some he was primarily the *Dean*—the man who told them they could not make it through law school and why didn't they try another profession. To a great many more he was a friend who offered a second chance at law school and a helping hand when things got tough.

And then, of course, he was always a teacher. He was the man who told you about contracts and municipal corporations and land titles and other things. Along this line, perhaps the student remembers the grade he got most of all. Now Dean Rasco has never been known as a "hard grader." Unlike many teachers who evidently feel that a certain percentage of students must either fail or get low grades, the dean operated on another basis. "I give them what they deserve. If everybody gets high grades or low grades, it's what they deserve," he's been known to say.

As far as a student was concerned, it would seem that his grading technique fits in well with his overall philosophy. Russell Rasco always believed—and still does—that everyone makes mistakes and that everyone should have a second chance. There are probably a hundred or more lawyers around Miami today because they got that second chance while they were students.

Of course, in recent years, Russell Rasco has been a teacher and not the dean. Students who have known him in recent years only think of him, see him, as a teacher.

Short, carrying a bit more weight than he used to, with a book clutched in one meaty hand, he was a familiar sight walking across the campus. You sat in his class and he talked. Sometimes he talked about things outside the book, even of things outside the course. Often he talked of his experiences, not always in the legal field.

For the student who had never been in his class before, the initial tendency was to say: "What the hell is he talking about. It doesn't have

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anything to do with whether or not comprehensive zoning is constitutional." But then, if you sat back and listened, you would realize that you were wrong. Because, more often than not, the stories were tied in with what was in the book or in practical aspects of the law. The good student soon realized this and understood the point the dean was trying to make. The poor ones never did.

When the time came, as it always did, that he wanted you to talk instead of him, you must stand. And it had better be straight. And you had better give the citation of the case, and listen to his questions when you had finished the brief. Because if you did not you probably wound up admitting that you did not really understand what it was all about. Or even if you did understand, that you could not explain it.

There are other things a student remembers about Russell Rasco. Some of them funny—like his endless fund of jokes—some of them sad, some of them personal.

Rasco, who will always be "the Dean," is leaving the University. And a lot of people will miss him. There are, in all honesty, probably some who will not. But that is not the sad thing.

The sad thing about his retirement, the person to feel sorry for, is the student who comes in next year. He won't know Russell Rasco.

And he will be the poorer for it.