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The “Hausler Mystique”

BY DEAN DENNIS O. LYNCH

Everything about Professor Richard A. Hauser was “larger than life.” Even now when I arrive at the Law School, it is as if he is there greeting me. “Good morning doctor, and how are you today?” I smile as I remember the twinkle in his eyes and the honest concern of the greeting. Most people do not want you to answer the greeting, but with Richard there was always a sense that he actually wanted to know how you were doing, particularly if you were one of the new tenure track faculty. He wanted each of his new colleagues to succeed and to enjoy the same thrill he thrived on each day when he entered the classroom.

When you responded to the greeting and had the early morning conversation with Richard, it was a little like being “on stage.” One second he would be whimsical, and just when you thought this would be one of those “light hearted” conversations with Richard, there would be a probing question. All would occur in a dramatic style that made it feel like you were in Act I of a play and that the afternoon conversation would be Act II.

Then there were the obligatory lunches at Christie’s with the “Doctor” for all junior faculty. You had to be prepared to open the door to your life well beyond the Law School. It was never that Richard would ask questions that were excessively private in nature. It was just that sharing one’s feelings about how things were going in general seemed to be the appropriate response to the question: “Now child, how are you really doing?” There was a warmth and caring about Richard that made him special.

The contrast between Richard, “the colleague” and Richard, “the professor,” was startling. His flair for the dramatic and his probing mind combined with his intense use of the Socratic Method made him a feared classroom teacher for first year students. He thrived on going head-to-head with his students and forcing them to become engaged with the law. He wanted them to appreciate the architecture of the law and the beauty of the subtle relationships embodied in contract doctrine. As students became more confident and able to engage him in class, the fear would shift to respect and admiration for how he was honing their analytical skills. This respect for Richard’s dedication and commitment to teaching would become the foundation of the exceptional relationship he enjoyed with so many generations of students. He truly became a giant among legal educators during his lifetime. Whenever I attend a class

reunion or visit with alumni in different cities, they all have at least one "Hausler story." No other faculty will ever quite match the teaching legend of Professor Hausler.

What was much less visible to our students was the ways in which Richard worked tirelessly for their welfare within the faculty. He was essentially a permanent member of the faculty Academic Standards Committee, which deals with the most personal issues of students who have faced academic difficulties. He was tough-minded, caring, and deeply committed to fundamental fairness in the treatment of students. Many graduates of the School, who faltered at first for personal reasons but eventually completed their legal education and are successful practitioners, owe their careers to Professor Hausler's commitment to giving each student a fair opportunity to succeed.

No one has meant more to the University of Miami School of Law or given more of himself to his students. Five decades of Hausler alumni are among our nation's best jurists, legal advocates, and business leaders. Still, those of us who had the opportunity to interact with Richard on a daily basis will remember him most for his love of life. He always seemed to want to get the most out of every moment, of every conversation, and of every class. We will miss Richard, but the "Hausler mystique" will always be a part of the traditions of the University of Miami Law School.