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Mr. Justice White Recalls

TO STUDENTS, THE DEFTNESS OF A MASTER SURGEON

BYRON R. WHITE*

My encounters with Wesley Sturges were much like those of thousands of his other students—those all too brief classes at the Yale Law School followed by periodic brushes with him down through the years as he did his Deany duties around the country. These sporadic exposures hardly add up to knowing Wes Sturges as his academic colleagues and regular companions must have known him. But the Dean was not given to striking glancing blows. One did not just slip by him in the dark. He impressed, even on slight acquaintance, and the impression lasted.

This was especially true in my case since I liked him, immediately and immensely. I liked and appreciated him even more as the years went by. And I liked him most of all when I last saw him in Miami and found him wholly involved with the law school there, in spite of the obvious serious problems with his health.

The Dean was an exciting teacher and it would be difficult to find his equal in the classroom. His classes were intense and consuming experiences, which seemed to be over before they began, stimulating, fast-moving, exhausting and mortifying. His insistent, driving analysis was a kind of classroom surgery which produced exceedingly thin slices of case, principle and judge, so thin that they were transparent to even the dimmest eye.

Learn "the law" we did, or what the cases said it was. But this was a by-product, a rather minimum goal which would never get you a passing grade. Lawyers are hired for many things, but the essence of their engagement, he thought, is to think and understand. And to this end he never for a moment took the pressure off a single student. He did not so much want the student to marvel at the teacher's mind and wisdom—which we did—but to get the student to use his own and to develop his own sense of things. He wanted us to think about the law and the job of

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a lawyer, to know that behind the black type of the cases and statutes lay a lawyer's world with very broad horizons indeed. He inoculated with a hardy skepticism and this he hoped would be lasting protection against a flabby mind operating on flabby principle.

Although he could and did render some fine performances, the Dean was no mere showman and his classes had no atmosphere of the vaudeville. He had dignity and elegance, his manners were faultless and he had an exquisite sense of humor. I have often thought what a great trial lawyer he would have been. Instead he was a great professor, an excellent Dean and a dear friend to us all. We are the best for it. This we know and are grateful.

Epitaph by Mr. Justice Douglas

IN THE CLASSROOM AND THE WORLD, A REACH FOR FAR HORIZONS

WILLIAM O. DOUGLAS*

When I first met Wesley A. Sturges he was beginning to write his book *Commercial Arbitrations and Awards* which was published in 1930. Indeed our first real visit was in the stacks of the Law Library in Hendrie Hall about midnight when he was putting the finishing touches on one chapter. Prior to then, I had been elected to the Yale Law faculty. That night in the Law Library and later in an all-night cafe over a cup of coffee, we fashioned the first bonds of friendship.

Wes Sturges, a Vermonter, had some of the qualities of granite. His friendship was durable; his convictions were not easily eroded. Mt. Mansfield in Vermont, viewed from a distance, shows a profile of a prostrate man—Forehead, Nose, Lips, Chin, and Adam's Apple. The Chin is the highest point, which leads Vermonters to say, "Thank God Vermont carries its Chin higher than its Nose." Wes Sturges held his chin high—proudly individualistic and courageous.

He was one of the best law teachers of this century—provocative, teasing, argumentative, challenging. He forced students to reach far horizons. He made fun of the conventional, he defied conformist doctrine, he demanded improvement of the *status quo*. Those who are the best teachers usually are not prolific scholars. Wes Sturges combined both talents. Yet he tired of each; and some of his happiest years, I think, were in administration. Yale Law School has had many outstanding Deans. Yet I believe that he was in a way the Deans' Dean during his two terms from 1945 to 1954. He was champion of the younger man

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