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Memorial: Eric B. Jensen

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DEDICATION

In the spring of this year the College of Law lost Eric B. Jensen to an untimely death. He served The University of Tulsa College of Law as professor from 1975 and as assistant dean from 1978 until his death. This issue is dedicated to him.

As tribute to Eric Jensen we offer these comments of the dean under whom he served. Our memory shall not pass with his death.

ERIC B. JENSEN: IN MEMORIAM

Eric Jensen was a short, stubby little guy with a twinkling eye, and almost fully developed mustache, a rapid walk and an absolutely incisive mind. He was also one of the finest human beings I have ever known. Eric was one of the first appointments made to the Tulsa Law Faculty after I became dean. A Harvard law graduate, a fact we never let him live down, Eric had a background of private law practice in California, with a two year stint as a professor of business law at California State University at Northridge. In the Spring of 1975, Professor Bill Gregory, a faculty colleague and a classmate of Eric's at Harvard, suggested Eric's name for a late-developing teaching vacancy; we quickly checked Eric out, came up with glowing recommendations, and hired him as a one year visiting professor of law, sight unseen. It was a gamble that paid spectacular dividends.

Eric taught corporations, property, and water rights. As a teacher, Eric had few peers. He was always prepared, displaying an unusual insight into his subject matter for a scholar so young. He was always both entertaining and demanding. He was a master at the socratic technique, the art of forcing students to think on their feet by asking a series of penetrating questions. From the day he began teaching, he played to rave reviews in his student evaluations. As a scholar he was rapidly making a name for himself as one of the nation's premier figures in water and natural resource law. He wrote very well indeed, with a crisp, yet natural style. In short, Eric was an intellectual in the best sense of that term; to say he was bright is to understate; he was an extremely intelligent man. He was a thinker with a conscience. I drafted Eric to be my assistant dean, despite his preference for the classroom, because I needed him so desperately. He was an admirable administrator. He gained the respect of both colleagues and students in one of the most difficult assignments in legal education. He was both humane and firm. He was committed to high standards and he was not afraid to enforce rules designed to foster high standards. Yet he had compassion and an understanding of the foibles of human nature. He liked everyone, students and colleagues alike, and his warmth was reciprocated.

But above and beyond his professional talents, I have not yet met

any man who was Eric's match in integrity. Eric knew right from wrong and he stood, always, for the right. I have witnessed him, time and again, in a tense faculty meeting, go to the heart of the debate and stress the importance of doing the right, not the expedient, thing. He spoke for right even as a junior faculty member, despite the fact that he sometimes found himself in a minority position. He did not waiver where principle was at stake and yet, by his tact, his persistence, and his persuasive ability he frequently won over his opponents. While a man of firm will, with a moral sense I have never seen exceeded in any person, he was also a man of great good humor. He had a dry, understated wit, a twinkling eye, and a smile for everyone. His nickname among law students was "Cubby", a name he loved and which was intended to express the great affection and esteem in which he was held by his students.

Lastly, and above all else, Eric was a gentleman and a family man. His life was his family. His greatest pride was his wife and his sons; he adored them. He was a deeply religious man and he lived the precepts of his faith. He was, truly, a man for all seasons.

I am enriched because I knew Eric Jensen. I hired him, I worked him hard, and I admired him. I have never made a better employment decision. But Eric was more than my assistant dean and my colleague. He was my friend. I miss him deeply.

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