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A TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE: FRANK
BEYTAGH

Professor Fernand N. Dutile*

I am delighted to say a few words on this wonderful occasion honoring Professor Francis X. Beytagh. I feel, as a relative newcomer to Florida Coastal School of Law, a need to establish my credentials for discussing Frank. He and I became colleagues at Notre Dame in 1971. Since that time, I have often played basketball against him—guess who fouled whom the most?; and I have often played squash against him—and I must say that the original designer of the squash court did not have in mind someone of Frank's size. Brigid and I have gone to the Beytagh home several times on March 17 to celebrate St. Patrick's Day; I should add, though, that we never left on March 17. (Some years we did well to get home on the eighteenth!) In twenty-nine years of friendship, Frank and Diane have shared with Brigid and me much joy—and significant sadness. Today's ceremony brims with joy, and Brigid and I are so pleased that we could be here to share joy yet again with Frank and Diane.

One of the qualities Frank has displayed over those twenty-nine years is unpredictability. I still recall orientation at Notre Dame the fall of 1974. Frank spoke to the newly arrived students who, of course, were extremely anxious. Frank went to the board and wrote "24-23." He then looked at the class solemnly—and you know that Frank can look very solemn—and said: "If you don't know what this refers to, you don't belong here." As Yogi Berra might say, "The tension in the room was so palpable you could touch it!" Some students clearly were wracking their brains to figure out what statute or Constitutional provision Frank was referring to. Well, of course, as Frank ultimately disclosed, "24-23" had been the score in Notre Dame's national-championship victory in the 1973 Sugar Bowl. I think that incident helped many students take themselves, if not law school itself, less seriously in the years ahead.

Frank has excelled throughout his life. He excelled as a student, both at Notre Dame, where he established an outstanding academic record, and at the University of Michigan, where he ranked first in his law school class and became editor-in-chief of the law review. He excelled as well in his

* Delivered at Florida Coastal School of Law, March 10, 2000, on the occasion of Professor Beytagh's investiture as holder of the Founders' Chair.

professional life—as law clerk to Chief Justice Earl Warren, in private practice, at the Justice Department, and as a law school professor, dean and president. These endeavors, of course, required more than unpredictability. Other qualities have driven this success, including his intellectual depth and practical wisdom. How often these qualities would surface in Frank, even at the law-faculty lunch table. A bunch of us would babble on regarding one issue or another. After the conversation had almost run its course, Frank, silent until now, would say, “I think there are three important points that we’re missing,” and then he would set out those points concisely. Almost invariably, he was right. If I were part of a group facing a crisis, I would very much want Frank there.

His intellectual depth and practical wisdom find consistent expression through his indefatigable devotion to mission. I have known many people with some of these qualities, but it is rare indeed to find all of them in the same person, and especially to the extent found in Frank.

Of course, even all of this would be to relatively little avail in a person of less character. Frank’s life unabashedly reflects his faith, integrity, conviction to justice, and devotion to family and friends. During the three decades that we have been friends, and despite the many miles that often separated us, I never doubted that Frank would respond unconditionally to any call for help.

At bottom, though, despite these many facets of his life, Frank is an educator. He realizes, in the words of philosopher Alisdair McIntyre, that true education is not what one learns, but what one becomes. Directly and indirectly, in class and out, Frank has aided students— and all of his other friends—to become better lawyers, better citizens, better spouses and parents, better persons. Frank, my good teacher and my good friend, congratulations on this superb and well deserved honor!

Thank you.