Tribute to Professor Elton E. Richard

Anton-Hermann Chroust

William D. Rollison
The Editors take pleasure in dedicating this issue of the *Notre Dame Lawyer* to Professor Richter, on the occasion of his retirement.

A Tribute To . . .

Professor Elton E. Richter

Professor Richter will retire from the Notre Dame Law School Faculty on August 31, 1958, upon the completion of thirty-one years of service that are distinguished by his diligence and sincerity of purpose. His interest in the Law School at Notre Dame has been more intense because he is one of its alumni, having received a J.D. degree in 1926.

Professor Richter has written several articles and book reviews for the *Notre Dame Lawyer*; and undertook, in cooperation with the late Professor Earl, the exacting task of preparing the Indiana Annotations to the Restatement of the Law of Agency.

His outstanding service, however, has been as a teacher, and he had dedicated himself to that service, with a zeal and earnestness equalled by few in the teaching profession and exceeded by none. His chief interest has been in the Law of Contracts, which he has taught throughout his teaching career. On occasions he has taught Creditors' Rights, Equity, Quasi-Contracts, Sales, Trusts, Negotiable Instruments, Code Pleading, Damages, Administrative Law, Suretyship and Securities.

Teaching may well be the greatest of all professions. A teacher must be hard-working, intelligent, patient, conscientious, enthusiastic and imaginative; he must have an abiding interest in his subject, an exceptional power of exposition and an unusual ability to evoke as well as sustain the interest of others. Professor Richter has all these qualities in full measure. But more than that: he is a teacher who regards teaching as his principal mission in life.

A man's chief contribution as a teacher is in his personal influence on his students and colleagues. This contribution cannot be directly observed or measured. It is something rather intangible, at best only partially known. Yet it cannot be doubted that this is, ultimately, the crowning achievement of the teacher. During his thirty-one years of law teaching, Professor Richter has introduced successive generations of students to a
great many legal subjects. He made his students think for themselves, and through his stimulating dedication and enthusiasm, he evoked in them intellectual interests which they retained throughout their lives. His teaching was marked by a thorough mastery of his subject matter, and his vivid presentation was always clear, concise and enlivened by a ready and unfailing wit. He would, on occasion, adroitly and purposefully lead his students into some dead-end reasoning from which he permitted them to escape by gleefully announcing, with a friendly twinkle in his eyes, that the wayward student had “stubbed his toe.” At the same time he displayed infinite patience with the less able. Alumni, students and faculty alike testify to the fact that he left a permanent imprint of his teaching and personality on every single student who passed through the Notre Dame Law School.

Good and efficient teaching demands as much as any man can possibly give — the giving of one’s self to one’s students. Like any great teacher, Professor Richter had a boundless capacity for giving. He has given himself without stint to his students — “the boys,” as he was fond of saying — and to the school which he served devotedly for thirty-one years. He was always accessible, upon an informal and friendly basis, to students and faculty members alike. His unflagging industry, his proverbial conscientiousness, his close relationship with students and faculty, and his youthful enthusiasm will always be remembered by those who came seeking his advice and aid. Almost certainly, he valued most of all the role he has played in assisting others. For he was primarily a giver, and he has proven himself outstanding in what may be the greatest of all professions — the teaching profession. This has been his lasting contribution. No honor can be greater and no memorial more enduring than the memory which all of us retain of Professor Richter as a great person, a great friend and a great teacher of the law.

Much must be left unsaid here. But for the record, the obvious should be added: we all bear an abiding affection for him, and we all deeply regret losing his active participation and wise counsel in the affairs of the Notre Dame Law School. We all shall miss the pleasant associations with him as a friend, a teacher and a colleague. We wish him well wherever he may go.

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