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MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO PETER A. R. LARDY

We at the Law School have shared an indelible experience. Pete Lardy joined us when we came together in 1972, lived among us, and then died one semester before graduation. We offer this tribute, knowing it to be inadequate, because future generations should know how deeply a group of people has been touched by one man.

Pete possessed a simplicity, a freshness and humor, which made him distinct. One remembers Pete sitting around at a barbecue, a can of Coors in one hand, wearing his boots and cowboy hat, laughing, tossing out old “country” sayings, and imitating one professor after another. He delighted us. Pete came here refreshingly different: a tobacco-chewing law student from a North Dakota ranch who seemed prouder of his new pickup truck than of his excellent grades. Despite his impressive academic record, despite having taught at an eastern university, and despite his cultured eloquence before a jury, Pete cherished the tough and earthy simplicity of his western heritage. He carried with him the memories and values of his family and hometown, Sentinel Butte, a town of 150 people lying in the heart of the North Dakota Badlands. His home was a white frame ranch house; his family is strikingly unified and proud, resilient from the demands of a ranch and yet gentle, warm, and loving. One recalls Pete’s humorous and captivating stories of his childhood. These folksy, humorous stories were of his life and are now part of his legacy to us.

One recalls the deceptiveness of Pete’s patient and soft-spoken manner. It did represent that side of Pete which carefully weighed the evidence, worked steadily, and avoided any type of showmanship. To the unfamiliar eye, however, it failed to reflect Pete’s reliability and maturity under pressure. At Colorado State, he had been a graduate teaching assistant, coached the debate team, completed his graduate work, and developed a thesis; he eventually went on to teach at the University of Vermont. Here at the Law School, Peter thrived under pressure: in the classroom, on the Lawyer, and in the courtroom.

We on the Lawyer have been especially fortunate. The writing, editing, and working together allowed us all to become close friends. During the summer of 1974, Peter remained at Notre Dame to coordinate our first issue. He performed everyone’s jobs and did them well since he brought essential attributes to his work: creativity, hard work, dedication, and a sense of humor. His insightfulness and eloquence in speaking manifested themselves in the trial practice course. For most students, this was a preparation for later practice and yet for Pete it was his ultimate achievement as a lawyer. His professor in the course recalls Pete’s classic cross-examination of a pathologist and remembers Peter as one of the most promising and talented young trial attorneys he has ever seen.

Pete’s accomplishments as an excellent student, highly competent editor, and potentially superb trial lawyer may in time be forgotten. What will remain and be remembered, most simply and yet most profoundly, is Peter the friend. His ability to accept his friends in spite of their faults drew out the good in each of them. Peter never stopped giving of himself. Even in the hospital, he took it upon himself to make his friends comfortable, to entertain them, to be more concerned about them than about his own problem.

Peter was our friend and colleague. By the time he died of cancer, however, he had become something more: a mirror and an example. Peter’s faith and love and courage give us strength. We knew him only three years, but few people will ever so magnificently and deeply touch us.

Peter, you remain with us.