

JEFFERSON B. FORDHAM—A PERSONAL NOTE

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Jefferson B. Fordham and I met each other in the fall of 1929 when we stood waiting to register as postgraduate students in the Yale Law School. Almost immediately he became Jeff to me and so he has remained ever since. Thus began one of the most valued friendships of my life.

Friendliness and courtesy were among his obvious traits from the beginning, but his fellow students soon learned that underneath this gracious exterior were the character and ability which have been his hallmarks ever since. Jeff knew why he had come to Yale and he made every minute count; he literally and figuratively took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves. Early to his desk in the library, he pursued his research with determination and effectiveness, and published several excellent law review articles shortly after we received our J.S.D. degrees.

Jeff's prowess was not limited to the sedentary occupations of the scholar. He excelled on the baseball lot or the basketball court as well as in the library or the classroom. Shortly after our arrival in New Haven, the Yale Law Journal staff challenged the postgraduate students to a softball game. I don't remember the score—probably even Jeff could not make up for the athletic deficiencies of the rest of us—but the outstanding event of the contest occurred when he stepped up to the plate and hit the ball clear out of the large sized lot. When the New England winter closed in, we went regularly in the late afternoon to the Yale gymnasium where we accused Jeff of confusing basketball with the game of football he had played at the University of North Carolina.

In all of his activities Jeff has displayed the same decisiveness and persistence. He came to Yale to prepare himself for a career in legal scholarship and teaching; he has held to that course with only temporary excursions into government service, municipal bond practice in New York, and a tour of duty in the armed services during World War II. In spite of very substantial inducements to pursue other paths, he returned to the law school world and has remained there because of his unswerving devotion to that career which he began to map for himself in the fall of 1929.

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Seasoned by twelve years of teaching at the law schools of West Virginia, Louisiana State, and Vanderbilt, and five years as dean of the Ohio State University Law School, Jeff brought to the deanship at Pennsylvania the qualities that were needed to lead the Law School during one of the outstanding periods of its long history. Demanding much of himself, he has expected much of others and has to an extraordinary extent promoted the conditions which have made achievement possible and pleasurable. Additions to the faculty, development of the curriculum, growth of the library, and expansion of the physical facilities have resulted of course from a corporate endeavor encompassing faculty, university administration, and alumni; but vital to that endeavor has been the leading role played by Jefferson B. Fordham as dean. During no other period of the Law School's history have so many unsuccessful attempts been made to attract faculty members to other leading law schools. No other circumstance evidences so clearly the presence of an outstanding dean.

Jeff is retiring as dean; he is not retiring from legal education. On July 1 he becomes a University Professor, a special rank granted to those few members of this University's faculty who have displayed outstanding achievement in their chosen fields and have made uncommon contributions to the life of the University. He has been granted a year's leave of absence, but we look forward to his return and the next stage of his Pennsylvania career. His eye and his swing remain as true and effective as they were forty-one years ago.