

JOHN D. LYONS—AS SEEN BY A COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND

Charles E. Ares*

At a faculty luncheon in his honor, John Lyons pointed out that early in his career he had discovered the pleasures and profit to be gained from retiring—frequently. In 1944, he retired as City Attorney of Tucson to return to private practice and someone gave him a party and an appropriate gift. Within a year he repeated the performance by retiring from private practice to become Judge of the Superior Court. In 1947, he did it again by retiring to become Dean of the College of Law. For some reason, there followed a break in what was becoming a tradition since John then proceeded to serve as dean for 19 years, a feat which, with my personal insight, I regard as remarkable, not to say astounding. It must be recorded, however, that he did manage to slip in a temporary “retirement” in 1951 while he served on the U.S. Wage Stabilization Board during the Korean war, and this was good enough to at least produce a law school assembly and a desk pen set. Then in 1966, the Dean retired from deaning and became a full-time teacher. This year he retired from teaching but held on to one seminar and has promised that he hasn’t run out of retirements yet. We can be sure that with ingenuity like that John Lyons will be a member of the law school community for a good while longer and by any sensible measure that is indeed a blessing for us all.

I have had the advantage of knowing John Lyons in more different roles than almost anyone else. As a first-year student I remember him as the teacher whose kindly approval after I had floundered through *Hadley v. Baxendale*, or some such case, made me believe, on very slim evidence, that maybe I had a right to be there after all. I remember with a good deal of gratitude the methodical way he led us to understanding when one or two of his colleagues seemed determined to hide the ball forever

* Professor of Law, University of Arizona,

(and succeeded!). As a student, I never lost my admiration for his gentleness, his judiciousness and his commitment to the law as the product of man's best but imperfect efforts to govern himself.

A few years later, John Lyons was my boss when he let me teach a course at the law school now and then. Again, his warm support of a neophyte teacher, his understanding of the terrors of facing voracious law students played a great part in my conclusion that the academic side of the profession was fully as satisfying as an active trial practice.

Several years later, we entered a new relationship when I returned to Arizona to be his successor in the dean's office when he returned to full-time teaching. The potential for strain implicit in that situation was obvious and it was heightened by the fact that the growth of the law school and the need to expand the faculty had already begun to present new challenges to this, as well as all other law schools in the country. Changes were coming but there could and would be much honest disagreement about just what form they should take. Without sacrificing his own strongly held views, John Lyons was a force for thoughtful and progressive changes in legal education. No ancient practices were beyond reexamination, although as a true conservative he finally found most to have withstood the test. But no one was quicker to urge the abandonment of some accepted way of doing things if it could not in his judgment be defended. The new dean and the young law teachers who later joined the faculty learned much about dispassionate deliberation and civility from having John with us as we worked our way through tough and sometimes passion-producing issues. He was on the winning side of the issue more times than not, but he also taught us all how the best lawyers among us could lose hard battles with humor and good grace.

For me, John Lyons epitomizes the virtues of the small town lawyer that he started out to be in upstate New York and his career is proof of the durability of those virtues and their importance in the hurly-burly of a booming Western city and a growing law school. He has been my teacher, my boss, my special colleague and, most important, my admired friend. His contributions to the law, to the College of Law and to Arizona are lasting monuments to a rich and varied career.