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Tribute to Dean James Hogg

Samuel L. Kaplan and Ralph Strangis[†]

In machine gun-like fashion, one question followed another. Before you could open your mouth to begin responding, more questions followed. If, perchance, you were able to provide a proposed answer to a question, there was absolutely no confirmation from the questioner as to whether you were right or wrong. There were only additional questions.

That was our earliest recollection of James Ferguson Hogg, the rookie law professor dealing with us as rookie law students — always elegant; always charming; always talking at a dizzying pace and, most of all, always asking questions. It was inconceivable to us that any law professor before or after had ever asked so many questions in such a short period of time without providing a single answer.

We would talk among ourselves (obviously out of Professor Hogg's earshot) about whether his was the ultimate Socratic method of teaching. While there was a strong belief that it was, there was always one in the group who would quip, "If you asked Professor Hogg if you could go to the restroom, his response would be, 'Why?'"

In truth, those questions — those withering questions, those relentless questions — in due course formed the strongest basis for our coming to understand the true meaning of law school. If, indeed, we were in law school not for the purpose of learning the "black letter law" that anyone could read from a book, but were rather learning how to think critically as future lawyers, Jim Hogg became our mentor, our teacher, and our guiding spirit. In all the classes that we took from him, we never received any answers. What we did learn from Jim Hogg was how to develop the answers and how to proceed in a critical and thoughtful fashion.

James Ferguson Hogg certainly had no monopoly on the Socratic method in law school; others engaged in it, some of

[†] Founding members of the law firm of Kaplan, Strangis and Kaplan, P.A., and students in Dean Hogg's first law school class.

them did it marvelously well. What made Jim Hogg unique was that, unlike so many who were carved out of the stereotypical models of old-time law professors, his intellectual demands were always accompanied by a genuine warmth, a graciousness, and a compelling style not to be equalled.

Jim was able to be our teacher and our motivator; yet, he was absolutely comfortable in being our friend, and indeed our pal, outside the classroom. This was an unusual time at the University of Minnesota Law School. There was little, and, in some cases, no difference in the ages of the students and the law professors. Any social separation between the faculty and the student body would have been artificial and unrealistic. Faculty and students became friends, and we became friends most of all with Jim Hogg. However, not once did that friendship spare any of us his relentless questioning in the classroom.

To be sure, Jim Hogg learned a thing or two from us. That smooth, elegant New Zealander came to understand that it was physically possible to hold a drink in one hand, while shooting dice with the other. He discovered that traditional Minnesota restraint did not preclude the having of a very good time by all.

Never was there a moment during our law school experience that this wonderful man exuded the slightest bit of pomposity or arrogance. When we were both officers of the *Minnesota Law Review*, Jim Hogg was always the one we could most count on to help us, to challenge us, and to improve the quality of our work product. Truly, his office door was always open.

The years have flown by and June of this year will be the thirty-fifth anniversary of our graduation from law school. During that entire period, we have continued to be the closest of friends with Jim Hogg. We witnessed his growth as an ever more powerful professor. With pleasure, we watched his performance as a member of the University of Minnesota administration, and enjoyed casting an appropriate number of "slings and arrows" at him when he entered the private sector and had to "work like the rest of us."

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, we have witnessed with joy his immense contributions to the William Mitchell College of Law. As University of Minnesota Law School graduates, it would be inappropriate for us to comment on the internal contributions that Jim has made to William Mitchell.

TRIBUTE TO DEAN HOGG

We leave that to others who have been closely allied with him in the performance of his work. However, we are able to say authoritatively that the perception of William Mitchell College of Law has grown in a most positive sense within this community and nationally under Jim Hogg's guidance. His incredible personality and intellect proved to be exactly that which was required for the networking in which William Mitchell's Dean necessarily had to engage. Jim Hogg singlehandedly connected William Mitchell with an entire community of those who had no real contact with the school. He made all of us understand that having another major law school of stature in our state was a worthwhile and meaningful purpose.

To our considerable amusement and amazement, we also discovered that Jim Hogg had theretofore untapped skills in fundraising. Without any real prior experience in the field, he was able, with relative ease, to ask for huge and seemingly embarrassing sums of money. More often than not, his requests bore fruit, and the law school and its library have benefitted mightily as a result.

In the communities of law and business within which the two of us reside, the name Jim Hogg is honored and valued for the splendid contributions he has made. However, to us, to our wives, and to our other mutual friends of long standing, Jim is known best for his warmth; for his loyalty; for his decency; and, above all else, for his capacity to ask yet another question.

