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REMEMBERING A SPECIAL FRIEND: JOHN J. TIGERT VI

C. PAUL ROGERS III*

WHEN I THINK of John Tigert, I will remember a brilliant lawyer, a passionate man, and a faithful friend. He lived his all too short life hard, probably too hard, consumed as he was by the practice of law and service to his clients. When John made a commitment, he intended to honor it. I am sure his clients understood this. I know his friends did.

John in fact brought passion to his commitments. Something inside him drove him to that old adage, "If something is worth doing, it is worth doing well." About fifteen years ago, John agreed to serve on the newly created Board of Advisors for the annual Air Law Symposium put on by the *Journal of Air Law and Commerce* at the SMU School of Law. For fifteen years he never missed a meeting, flying to Dallas on his own time and at his own expense twice each year to help plan the symposium. By agreeing to serve on the board, he made a commitment and that commitment became a devotion to the symposium and its student editors. Not only did he attend meetings, he put in an inordinate number of hours for the symposium throughout the year, contacting potential speakers, raising (and quietly contributing) scholarship funds for the student editors, and even proof-reading brochures.

I first came to know John in 1982 when I became faculty advisor to the *Journal of Air Law and Commerce*. I soon learned to admire John's generosity of spirit, his sense of fairness, his intellect, and his work ethic. He not only became my friend but my family's friend. I would try to get John over to the house whenever possible when he was in town. He enjoyed the visits with my wife and kids (who always called him Mr. Tiger) immensely, and he appreciated the small pleasures in life. Once we even prevailed upon him to play whiffle ball in the front yard. He talked about that twenty minutes in our front yard for years, as if

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inviting him to play was the biggest favor we could have given him. (Although I don't think I ever saw John without a coat and tie, we did prevail upon him to remove his coat on that occasion.)

Friendship to John was a serious matter, not to be taken lightly. Once John and I disagreed in a board meeting on some matter of board policy. I said something I should not have and John, as was his wont, responded in kind. After the meeting we visited and tried to make light of our disagreement. A few days later John called from Washington. He was genuinely disturbed by the blip in our relationship and just wanted to talk. My friendship was important to John, and John was committed to it.

John's personality was on the gregarious side. One never had a short conversation with him. He would call with something on his mind and ask if you had five minutes to talk. With John that meant at least thirty minutes, if not longer. But you could bet that the conversation would not be dull. With John's hectic schedule the telephone was a way he kept up with his friends while mixing business with pleasure.

Life to John was not shades of gray, but was black and white, proper and improper, right and wrong. His sense of honor and propriety was a throwback to a simpler, perhaps better time. A couple of years ago a local comedian was engaged to provide some humor at the symposium banquet. Despite John's prior admonitions to him that no off color jokes were allowed, the comedian did cross over the line a couple of times during his act. John was absolutely livid and did not want us to pay the guy. He simply did not think the women in the audience should be subjected to that type of humor. My wife Lynn missed the banquet and John told me, "I'm just glad that Lynn didn't have to hear that smut." I too was glad Lynn was not present, but for a slightly different reason. I was afraid John might have punched the guy out if she had been there.

John Tigert was a man of immense intellect and accomplishment (high school valedictorian, student body president at Vanderbilt, honors graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force Reserve where he resisted promotion for years so he could continue to fly one weekend a month). He served his country in Vietnam and in Desert Storm. But John lived in the present, not the past. One never heard of these achievements because his concerns and energies were directed to the here and now.

John's too brief life was shaped by his sense of propriety, his sense of commitment, a generous and giving spirit, unswerving loyalty to friends and clients, and his passion for that which he believed was good and right. The Air Law Symposium was fortunate to be the beneficiary of John's considerable talent and effort, and I was fortunate to be the beneficiary of his friendship. The symposium will not be able to replace John as an advisor, and I will not be able to replace him as a friend. But John has made an indelible impact on us both and for that I am most thankful.

