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A. J. Thomas - Teacher and Scholar

ROY R. RAY*

THE UNTIMELY DEATH of Aaron Joshua Thomas, Jr. (A. J. to all his friends) on December 3, 1982, came as a great shock to his faculty colleagues and students and to the entire University Community. I had chatted with him the previous day and he had told me of his decision to move up his retirement date to May 1983. As usual he seemed in good spirits and I had no inkling of what was to come. A. J. served the Law School and the University for 35 years in many capacities and was greatly admired by all who knew him. As the news of his death spread, messages of condolence poured in to his wife Ann from friends and former students throughout the United States and from abroad. He will be sorely missed.

A. J. was a native of Sherman, Texas. After graduation from high school there, he attended Texas A & M University and received his B.S. degree in 1939. He studied law at the University of Texas. After receiving his LL.B. in 1943, he entered the United States Foreign Service, serving as Vice Consul in Costa Rica, The Azores and the Netherlands. When he left the Service in 1946 he enrolled in the Graduate Program of the University of Michigan Law School and earned the Master of Laws degree in June 1947. After completion of his thesis in 1951 he was awarded the Doctor of Science of Law degree. After interviewing with prestigious law firms in New York and receiving several job offers he came to Dallas at our invitation to discuss a possible teaching position. We were impressed

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with his background, experience and personality and offered him a position as Instructor. Fortunately for the Law School he accepted our offer and that Fall embarked upon a career of teaching and scholarly writing that was to span the next 35 years.

On September 10, 1948, A. J. was married to Ann Van Wynen, a charming and brilliant lady, native of the Netherlands and resident of New York, who had been his classmate at the University of Texas Law School. She had also spent the intervening years in the United States Foreign Service, serving as Vice Consul in Johannesburg, London and the Hague. They had a wonderful and productive life. I have not known another couple who shared so many facets of life. Ann was not only a charming and devoted spouse but also a gifted teacher and writer, a full partner in most of the projects they carried on together.

A. J. moved rapidly through the tenure ranks and became a full professor in 1955. When the William Hawley Atwell Chair was established in 1970, A. J. was named to that Professorship, which he still held at the time of his death. He was an excellent classroom teacher and greatly respected by his students. On three occasions he received the Outstanding Professor Award. His principal courses were Constitutional Law, International Law, Inter-American Regional Law and Conflict of Laws, although from time to time he taught such courses as Admiralty and Equity. He lectured on American Constitutional Law at universities in Cuba, Chile, Peru, Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, Cyprus and South Korea. Over the years he served as consultant to many state and federal agencies including: United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency; Central American Common Market and Commission for Revision of the Texas Constitution. He was an active member of the American Bar Association Committee on International and Comparative Law from 1968 until his death.

During his long tenure A. J. served in several administrative positions. He was Faculty Editor of the *Southwestern Law Journal* 1947-1950; Director of the Law Institute of the Americas 1953-1960; member of the Executive Council to the Dean

1963-1973; Chairman of the Committee on Graduate Legal Studies 1963-1970 in which capacity he was primarily responsible for developing the Graduate Program. He served several terms as a member of the Faculty Senate. In the Spring of 1974 he was acting Dean while Dean Galvin was on leave and from 1978 to 1980 he was Dean Ad Interim serving with great effectiveness in both instances.

Throughout his teaching career A. J. was an industrious and productive scholar. He was the author of some ten books, nine of which were coauthored by Ann. Among the better known titles are: *Non-Intervention* (1956); *The Organization of American States* (1968); *International Law of Indirect Aggression and Subversion* (1965); *The Concept of Aggression* (1973); *World Rule of Law - Prospects and Problems* (1974); *The War-Making Powers of the President* (1982). The latter volume was in press at the time of his death. A. J. was also the author of some 36 articles in law reviews and periodicals on a variety of subjects many of which were coauthored by Ann.

A. J.'s contributions to the development of the Law School are unsurpassed. It always held first place in his priorities. He never considered going elsewhere. His influence on the lives and careers of former students have greatly enhanced the school's reputation throughout the United States and in many countries in Latin America, Europe and Asia. From the time he joined the faculty in 1947 we formed a friendship which grew closer with the years. He was one of very few people who have always used both my first and middle names. I shall miss his booming greeting "Hello Roy Robert." But I shall always be grateful for the wonderful association we had during the past thirty-five years.

