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A Tribute to Professor John S. Lowe

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A TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR JOHN S. LOWE

*Eric C. Camp**

GRATITUDE is what first comes to my mind when I think about Professor Lowe. I am so grateful to call him a teacher, mentor, and friend, and his positive impact on my life is immeasurable. This is a feeling I share with hundreds of his other former students. And yet, I have struggled to find the words to do him justice in this tribute.

Of course, Professor Lowe is brilliant. Everyone knows that. He literally wrote the textbooks that he (and many other oil and gas professors) use and has published countless law review articles over the decades. He has taught students and government officials all around the world, arbitrated cases worth astounding amounts of money, and frequently served as an expert witness in disputes.

But to me, that is not what makes Professor Lowe so special. There are a lot of brilliant law professors. Professor Lowe is unique because of how he cares—really cares—about his students’ successes inside and outside of the classroom, not just in word, but in action. I am sure hundreds of Professor Lowe’s former students have stories of his impact on their lives and careers for the better. Here’s mine as my tribute to Professor Lowe.

I fell in love with oil and gas law after my 1L summer clerkship with a small firm in East Texas—before I had even taken an oil and gas law course. My 1L grades were not very good, so I set out to develop a strong oil and gas resume in law school to ultimately get a job in the field. I met Professor Lowe in the Fall of my 2L year when I registered for his Oil & Gas Law and Oil & Gas Contracts classes (in my attempt to take every relevant course in the field).

In addition to taking all the relevant courses, I also wanted to start an SMU Energy Law Association to bring more programming to the law school (and further improve my oil and gas law resume). Professor Lowe happily agreed to be the faculty sponsor, which helped immensely with obtaining official recognition and funding from the Student Bar Association. Not to be a sponsor in name only, Professor Lowe regularly attended the group’s meetings (and I doubt it was just for the Jimmy John’s sandwiches). His assistance was crucial in recruiting speakers; senior lawyers were very responsive when we mentioned that Professor Lowe gave us their names! That is Professor Lowe.

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By my 3L year, I had taken all the oil and gas and related courses but still wanted to study the subject in greater detail. I asked Professor Lowe to let me do a directed research project for him for credit, and he, of course, agreed. He was busy teaching a full course load and maintaining an active consultant and expert witness practice, and yet when a student with a demonstrated interest in oil and gas law reached out for additional coursework, he said yes. That is Professor Lowe.

There are a few oil and gas law professional organizations that give scholarships to law students for tuition or to attend professional conferences.¹ Professor Lowe has been active in these organizations for years. He always made a point to advertise these scholarship opportunities to his students and offered to write recommendation letters on their behalf. When I applied for the scholarships as a 3L, we knew there would be students with better grades because of my poor 1L year, but Professor Lowe chose to emphasize my demonstrated interest in the field in his recommendation letters. And I was awarded three scholarships from professional organizations based in part on Professor Lowe's recommendation letter. That is Professor Lowe.

My relationship with Professor Lowe did not end at graduation. In the early years of my practice, I often reached out to him for his thoughts on unique legal issues I saw in the Barnett Shale gas play around Fort Worth. He always graciously gave me his thoughts—for free—and was genuinely interested in the new legal issues arising from technological advances. On many occasions, he even invited me to guest lecture in his classes on developing legal issues in shale plays—truly one of the honors and highlights of my career. That is Professor Lowe.

For years Professor Lowe served as an international legal advisor for petroleum issues with the Commercial Law Development Program of the U.S. Department of Commerce (CLDP). When they asked him to advise on shale gas issues, Professor Lowe referred them to me. That introduction to CLDP, and his vouching for me, has turned into 10+ years of work for me as an international legal advisor for petroleum and energy issues with CLDP. That is Professor Lowe.

Regularly, students of Professor Lowe reach out to me because he gives them my name as a possible mentor. This shows me that he is still doing it—50+ years into his career, he is still going above and beyond to help his students. He is connecting people. And I bet he is still advertising the student scholarship opportunities and writing countless recommendation letters. He is still doing it because that is Professor Lowe.

These days I live and work overseas. I do not get to see Professor Lowe as much as I would like, but I relish every time I do, typically in Dallas or at a professional conference, usually with his lovely wife, Jackie, who has

1. The Foundation for Natural Resources and Energy Law (formerly known as the Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation), Energy & Mineral Law Foundation, and the Association for International Energy Negotiators (formerly the Association for International Petroleum Negotiators).

been by his side for the whole ride. As I conclude, my heart is full of gratitude for Professor Lowe for everything he has done for me and for countless other former students and for his example of how to go above and beyond in service to others. Thank you, Professor Lowe.

