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I try to avoid saying things like, “we’ll never see his kind again.” Every generation says that about their elders, and I seriously doubt the human race has been steadily declining. In this instance, however, I have no choice. Because the platitude is true when it comes to David Currie, who was—if you’ll forgive my piling on still more clichés—a scholar’s scholar, a teacher’s teacher, and an academic’s academic. David was unique, and the simple fact is that we won’t see his like again.

David was my teacher, my colleague, my mentor, my coauthor, a surrogate father figure, and my friend. In each of these roles he reshaped me, like he reshaped so many others. He did so by virtue of his generosity, his straightforward honesty, his utter lack of pretension, and, above all, his fierce and uncompromising integrity. David was the model of what we all strive (or should strive) to be in this profession that is so much more than just a profession. David touched the young men and women he taught; he left a mark on the kinds of lawyers and people they became. And in this way, he left a wonderful and lasting legacy. I hope he knew that.

Countless stories could be told that capture what made David special. For me personally, it may have been the hours and hours he spent with me when I was just starting out as a law professor. I had been assigned (yes, new teachers were assigned courses in those bygone days) to teach Conflict of Laws and Federal Jurisdiction—two subjects that David had taught and in which he had authored leading casebooks. Each day, as I prepared the next day’s class, I came up with what seemed to me to be new ideas about the cases or how to teach them. A few of these ideas might even have been interesting; most, I now see, were either wacky or just plain wrong. But I would run down to David’s office to talk them through. I did this without even thinking about it, maybe nine or ten times a day, often staying for a half hour or more.

David had his own work to do, of course. He had recently decided he should teach the whole first year canon and was working on new courses, as well as just beginning the research for his encyclopedic volumes on the Constitution in the Supreme Court. It must have been incredibly annoying to be constantly interrupted by this inconsiderate (though enthusiastic) young colleague, who wanted only to blab about his own half-baked ideas. Yet David never failed to put down what-

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ever he was working on and talk things out with me for as long as I wanted. He was never short or impatient, and he never asked me to come back later. He made me feel as if helping me was the most important thing he had to do at that moment. So self-absorbed was I, that at the time I failed to realize how extraordinary this was. Even with David's example, I have never been this generous. Nor has anyone else I know.

I could easily tell stories like this ten times over. But rather than that, I want to talk about David as a teacher. Because, with time, I have come to understand something that I think David always knew: as much as we enjoy working on scholarship, and as important as it can be, it is our role as teacher that matters most. Among the rewarding parts of being a dean is the privilege to hear the stories law school graduates tell: stories about how this or that professor changed their lives; stories about how we shaped their thinking; stories about how we helped their careers or helped them through personal crises, helped them find spouses or helped them make sense of the world, or just plain helped them. Our students leave us and grow up. They become our peers or surpass us in accomplishments. But the time they spent with us at the beginning, when they were just starting to find themselves—still choosing the values by which to lead their lives and deciding which personality feels most comfortable—remains among their most important and indelible experiences.

I took two classes from David in law school: Constitutional Law I and Federal Jurisdiction. Both were revelatory: my first and best introduction to what it actually means to be rigorous. David showed us how law could be incredibly complicated and yet also completely commonsensical. He showed us what it meant to construct a whole legal argument. He was unrivaled in the classroom.

People who reflect on David's teaching usually focus on the antics he used to lighten things up. David wore costumes and sometimes broke into tune. He might stomp up and down to make a point. He did all sorts of things I've never had the daring to do myself because gambling around would seem false or silly coming from me. But David had tremendous charisma in front an audience (no surprise given his undeniable talent as an actor and singer, though not what one might expect given how soft-spoken he was in private), and he used it to dramatic effect to engage students.

Yet this is not the quality that made David such a great teacher. What made David great was the substance of his classes. More so than any other teacher, David understood what it meant to teach students to "think like lawyers," and he put us through the paces to hammer the lesson home. Every day was a workout. Literally. My Federal Jurisdiction class was relatively small, maybe twenty-five students, and it

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met in Classroom II—the law school’s largest room, designed for classes of 180. Yet more than once, a student in the class that followed ours noted with amazement how after Fed Jur the room was sticky and humid, like a gymnasium or a locker room.

No one could get a whole class engaged in argument like David. I remember sessions in which he let us—or led us to—develop a line of argument for fifty or fifty-five of the sixty-five minute session, only to reveal with ten minutes left that our whole analysis was flawed. The last ten minutes became a frantic race to unravel everything we had done and to construct a new line of reasoning that made more sense. We could do this because David had in fact been fully in control the whole time, and the points he had skillfully helped us articulate in connection with an unworkable line of argument could be reassembled into something better. No wonder the room reeked of sweat.

David’s classes were exhilarating, and they have remained with me ever since. I sometimes wondered whether I had made it all up, whether David really was as good as memory made him. So I sat in on a class during my tenth law school reunion. I had, by that time, left Chicago for Michigan and become a seasoned teacher with eight years under my belt. I knew how to construct a class and keep it moving, and I understood how easy many things were that had seemed mysterious and impressive to me as a student. I sat in the back of the room with some of my former classmates. David was teaching Conflict of Laws, the subject I knew best (in part because I was now a coauthor on David’s casebook). I recalled similar visits from alumni when I was a student: recalled looking at them in the back of the room, wondering who those old people were. It was dismaying and a little sad to realize that my former classmates and I were now the old people. But I sat back smugly, expecting to see a class not unlike my own.

I was wrong. Though I knew the material, I found myself mesmerized, as I always had been by David’s teaching. It was a lesson in what it meant to be a truly great teacher. I left the class in wonder, thrilled to recapture a moment of my youth but put in place by the realization that, no matter how hard I worked, I could never match David.

None of us can. It was a singular privilege to study law with David Currie. We’ll not see his like again.