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F. Leary Davis, Jr.
Dean and Professor of Law
A Tribute to F. Leary Davis, Jr.

In September 1985, the Campbell University School of Law had to prepare itself for a change in the office of Dean. F. Leary Davis, Jr. had decided he wanted to enter full-time teaching and scholarship. The decision caused this writer, in his mind's eye, to relive the founding of the law school and the appointment of Dean Davis as the founding Dean.

An Historic Decision

On September 20, 1974, the Board of Trustees of Campbell University, with strong support from the Presidential Board of Advisors and other volunteer boards and committees of the University, approved a resolution authorizing the administration to establish a law school. Although at that time, North Carolina had the highest population per lawyer in the Nation and although some counties of North Carolina had little or no legal services and although the four established law schools had recently received 6,400 applications for the then 660 available seats, there was some opposition to the establishment of another law school. The opposition came notwithstanding a declaration by the trustees that they were calling for the establishment of a new and different law school.

At the outset, it was determined that if Campbell were to succeed in her mission, the dean, teachers and the students would have to be of the highest quality — academically, morally, and spiritually. All would be expected to adhere to the finest traditions of American legal education. A prime objective would be to see that the students were advanced not only in scholastic attainment but in the development of those ethical values upon which the legal system had been built.

Although a number of well-qualified applicants were considered, in November 1975 F. Leary Davis, Jr., a native of Zebulon, North Carolina, was selected to be the founding dean. A 1967 graduate of the Wake Forest College School of Law where he was a
Babcock Scholar, Dean Davis was in practical experience ideally prepared to discharge the duties of his office. After graduating from the Wake Forest Law School, he had entered the general practice of law both in Zebulon and Raleigh. He had served as Assistant Prosecutor of the Wake County District Court and Town Attorney of the Town of Zebulon.

In other ways, he was ideally suited for his position. He had the wisdom and good fortune to marry Joy Baker, his childhood sweetheart. They were the parents of three lovely children. Both Dean and Mrs. Davis were members of the Baptist Church which owns and operates Campbell University.

Much more could be said about suitability and fitness for the task at hand but now, ten years later, it is abundantly clear that F. Leary Davis was more than equal to the task of serving as the first Dean of the Faculty of Law. Having come to the Deanship knowing that he was expected to build a "new and different law school," he quickly built good will among the students, faculty and administration of the University and among the Bench and Bar, both locally and nationwide.

He readily accepted and welcomed the fact that Campbell was to be and remain a small law school. He believed that a student body of three hundred students was the ideal size for the development of the innovative program that would become the hallmark of legal education at Campbell. Furthermore, it would provide the avenue for greater student involvement in trial practice, law review and the publication of a newspaper designed to keep the practitioner abreast of the continuing developments in the practice of law and in legal education.

As the trustees had shown wisdom in selecting Leary Davis as the first Dean of the Faculty of Law, Dean Davis demonstrated a similar sensitivity in the selection of those to serve on the faculty. His own success in this critical area was assured when he managed to get scholars with nationwide reputations to join him in the exciting venture of founding a new school. Along with the more established scholars, he recruited some very talented young teachers who would be the scholars of the future, including some outstanding women. The work of these talented individuals has been complimented by the contributions of an able group of adjunct professors who are recognized specialists in their fields.

From the beginning, there has been an emphasis on scholarly productivity. Stipends have been given for summer research and sabbatical leaves have been provided for faculty members who
plan to devote their time entirely to scholarship. Although faculty members are encouraged to participate in some activities outside the classroom, a ceiling on the amount of outside activity has insured that faculty members would have adequate time for their classroom duties, scholarly activities and availability to their students.

Although there were several considerations that led Dean Davis to forego a promising practice to accept the deanship of a new law school, there is no doubt that the assurance of freedom to develop a "different" law school was one of the main attractions. He and the faculty have done this in a commendable fashion without, it is believed, sacrificing the theoretical education that is so essential to the development of a highly skilled practitioner of the law. In other words, they have gone a long way in bridging the "gap" between the classroom and the courtroom. For example, programs in trial advocacy, computer literacy and research and law office economics have been added. Students have been encouraged to spend their weekends, holidays and summer vacations serving as apprentices in lawyers' offices or in law-related positions of responsibility where they can study the law in action.

All will agree that Dean Davis has led his faculty in building a "different law school." As important as these advancements have been, they have not, in the opinion of this writer, been his greatest achievement. It isn't enough that a dean simply develop an environment in which good teachers can transmit a knowledge of the law or develop new courses of study. It is imperative that he create an atmosphere in which the students can develop a respect and love for the finest traditions of the profession. They must be able to acquire from him a deep sense of dedication to the duties and responsibilities that will be expected of them as lawyers. In that Dean Davis has been highly successful.

If I may paraphrase, "Campbell University and the Campbell University School of Law are a better place because F. Leary Davis, Jr. journeyed here."

Norman A. Wiggins
President and Professor of Law
Campbell University
I was fifteen years old when Leary Davis hired me to work for his law firm in Zebulon, North Carolina for the summer. I had no idea of what the legal profession was about, of what lawyers did, or of what I wanted to do with my life. I did know that I wanted to escape the hot tobacco fields of eastern North Carolina while earning spending money that summer. From my work in his law office over the next five years, I began to perceive the profession of law as challenging, noble, honorable, and as my vocation.

Watching Leary Davis practice law in a small town in eastern North Carolina made me want to be a lawyer. He was a highly competent lawyer, but more than that, he represented all that is good in our profession. I saw him give the farm worker, who came into the office from the field still sweaty and dirty, the same courtesy, attention, professionalism and quality of legal representation that he gave the wealthy corporate client. I saw him represent clients who otherwise could not afford competent representation for fees paid at the rate of $5.00 per week. I saw him serve as a leader in our community and in our church even though those activities consumed time that otherwise could have been spent with his family or on his busy law practice.

As a practitioner, Leary Davis demonstrated a high sensitivity to ethical concerns; care, warmth and compassion for his clients; and a sense of responsibility to the public to use the power that attorneys wield in our society in constructive ways. Through his conduct he demonstrated his view of the profession as one of service. It was that sense of service and his pride in our profession that I think brought him to Campbell: to better the profession and to improve the quality of legal representation in North Carolina and beyond.

Working with Dean Davis on the faculty, I have come to appreciate his integrity, his enthusiasm, his courage, his patience, and his tenacity. As a student and later as a faculty member, I have watched him devote countless hours to the creation of Campbell's law school, overseeing every aspect of the school's development. I have watched him design a curriculum and teach his classes in a way to impart the same sensitivity to ethical concerns, the same attitude of warmth and compassion for clients, and the same sense of responsibility to the public that he demonstrated as a practicing lawyer. I have also watched him lead the faculty at
Campbell by instilling in us a sense of unity of purpose and by motivating us to aspire to realize our full potential as faculty members and as a law school.

As dean, Leary has demonstrated an incredible ability to tap the full potential of the people with whom he works by sharing his vision. This ability, combined with his diligence and high standards, have enabled Campbell to start a new law school. But it is his view of the profession that has given this law school its character. And it is his view of the profession that he has shared with Campbell students over the last ten years. As the law school bulletin states, "Campbell proposes to educate lawyers who will be prepared from the outset of their careers to serve their communities with legal skill and ethical and intellectual leadership, in the noblest tradition of counsellor." This statement, contained in a description of the character and goals of Campbell University School of Law, also describes how Leary Davis practiced law. If Leary Davis had not been the person he is, diligent, visionary, able to inspire others with his vision, and if he had not viewed our profession as one of service bound by moral and ethical obligations and dedicated to quality legal representation to everyone, Campbell would not be the unique law school it is, with the faculty and students it has attracted. As a former student, a colleague and a friend, I am grateful to Dean Leary Davis for dedicating the last ten years of his life to building this law school. As a faculty member and alumna of Campbell, I am glad that he has chosen to join the full-time faculty and I hope he will continue to share his vision, his industry, and his view of the profession with his colleagues and his students for many years to come.

I congratulate his students, the staff of the Campbell Law Review, for recognizing his many accomplishments as the founding dean at Campbell University Law School by dedicating this issue to F. Leary Davis, Jr.

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