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CHARLES E. CORKER—A FRIENDLY TRIBUTE

Richard S.L. Roddis*

Upon his retirement from the Law Faculty in 1987, Charles E. Corker completed a distinguished career as scholar, teacher, and practitioner of the law. Having been blessed to know Charley Corker for over thirty years, I welcome the chance to record why so many of us appreciate him.

To begin with, Charley is the classic scholar. He craves to know everything that can be learned about any area of the law that attracts his attention. His interests reach not only throughout the law but far into other fields: politics, history, literature, drama, to mention only some. In all these areas he reads constantly, deeply, and ecumenically. He stirs, blends, and synthesizes all of this accumulated knowledge into helpful, and often novel, insights about law and affairs, and generously shares them in writings, conversation, and classes. Scholars like this—persistent diggers and carvers in the quarries of knowledge—make universities what they are supposed to be. Fortunately, we have had our goodly share of these uncommonly dedicated people in this Law School and Charley Corker is an admirable example.

Next, I think of Charley as a teacher and colleague. Perhaps these two roles should be treated separately. But with Charley we need to take them together, because he treats students as colleagues. He assumes, at least until proven otherwise, that anyone who voluntarily joins the academic circle of the Law School must be as eager as he in searching, sifting, and shaping ideas, and as committed to sharing them in free discourse and clear writing.

Charley has been a constantly supportive colleague. He is generous with his time, attention, and ideas. He long has attended every lecture, forum, colloquium, reception, banquet, party, bust, or other affair for faculty, students, staff, visitors, or alumni. Charley is a cheerful and resilient participant. He has always tried to make the enterprise go.

Before he came to the Law School in 1965, Charles Corker already had a diverse and successful career behind him. Charley is from Idaho. He started as a freshman at Stanford, but part way through he went to Washington, D.C. as an administrative assistant to Idaho's Senator William E. Borah (for whom Idaho's highest mountain is

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named). There Charley attended George Washington University at night. After Borah died in 1940, Charley returned to Stanford and graduated in 1941.

Charley began at Harvard Law School that fall, but World War II interrupted his law school studies. He was a lieutenant in the Navy Supply Corps, assigned to the blimp service.¹ After the War, Charley returned to Harvard Law School, and was graduated in a class given the bifurcated designation "Class of 1943 (1946)." He immediately joined the faculty of Stanford Law School as an Acting Assistant Professor. While at Stanford, he was one of the two faculty founders of the Stanford Law Review.

In 1954, Charley joined the Office of the Attorney General of California as a Deputy Attorney General on the special legal staff for the Colorado River Board. The Board watched over and defended the interests of the State of California in the waters of the Colorado. These lawyers primarily represented the State in the massive five state litigation in the original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of the United States known as *Arizona v. California*. Charley devoted a good part of the next eleven years to that endeavor. The California Colorado River legal staff was a close company of extraordinary lawyers, many of whom became leaders of the California bench and bar.

While Charley was so engaged, the Attorney General appointed him as Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Southern California Office of the Attorney General. In this position, Charley managed a large, diverse public law office.

For three years, I worked for Charley as chief of one of the divisions of that office. He was a challenging boss. His pursuit of excellence in the professional work of the legal staff was persistent and pervasive. Charley was indefatigable in his own exertions while demanding the most and the best from others. In addition to carrying a heavy load of his own professional work in *Arizona v. California* and handling the many routine administrative duties of his position, Charley reviewed and critiqued a vast amount of the legal documents, opinions, and briefs produced from every sector of the office. We came to feel a sense of pride when our briefs and opinions regularly passed his intellectual quality screen.

1. I mention this only to lament that with the impending retirement of Professor and Associate Dean Robert L. Fletcher, who was a blimp pilot in World War II, our Law School will have lost the distinction, a unique one I would suppose, of counting two former blimp officers on its faculty.

Dedication to Professor Charles E. Corker

I find it interesting that the three main subjects to which Charley committed himself during the years I have known him as lawyer and as professor have been water resource law, contracts, and constitutional law.² The juxtaposition of contract law and constitutional law is significant to me. It shows an abiding interest in the ordering of human affairs both by individual private agreement and by the highest expression of collective authority.

I have spoken so far of a man's professional career and commitments. But no description of Charley Corker would be complete without mention of his personal side and of his wife, Betty Holman Corker. Betty is an authentic Northwesterner. She was born in Port Townsend and was raised and educated in Olympia and Seattle, where all three of their children and five grandchildren reside.

Betty and Charley have shared their adult lives and characters. They are idealistic, thoughtful, and outreaching to all in need. Those who come in contact with them are touched by their openness, loyalty, cheer, and generosity. Better citizens and better friends one cannot find.

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2. I will put aside the water law but with this observation. It may be lightly regarded by Northwesterners who, in the past at least, had so much they found no need to fight over it. As a former Californian I can assure you, however, that for the first two-thirds of our century it was a vital subject for the people and governments of the southwestern United States. Long and bitter battles, physical, political, and legal, were fought over water. The law controlling its allocation drew many of the finest lawyers to practice in the region.

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