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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

Charles W. Ehrhardt

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2002 MASON LADD LECTURE

The Mason Ladd Lecture, the premier lecture series presented at the Florida State University College of Law, honors the memory of Mason Ladd, the founding Dean of the law school. After guiding the law school at the University of Iowa for over 25 years as Dean, Ladd accepted the position of Dean at Florida State and began to plan the establishment of our new law school. When he accepted this challenge, there was no building or faculty, and were no students. However, in the fall of 1966, the law school at Florida State opened with over 100 students enrolled. Under his leadership and constant prodding, the College of Law began its steady growth. Prior to his retirement at Florida State in 1969, he obtained funding for a new College of Law building and completed the preliminary planning for its construction. For three years thereafter Mason returned each winter to Tallahassee to teach evidence and renew old acquaintances.

Mason Ladd was a scholar who was intimately involved in the creating of the modern law of evidence. He was a member of the Standing Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure of the Judicial Conference of the United States which reviewed the work of the United States Supreme Court Advisory Committee on the Federal Rules of Evidence and forwarded the rules to the Supreme Court of the United States for their approval. He also participated in the drafting of the *Model Code of Evidence* and was a member of the committee of the National Conference of Commissioner on Uniform State Laws which drafted the *Uniform Rules of Evidence*. He authored and co-authored casebooks on evidence, federal jurisdiction, civil procedure, and Iowa probate practice. His book, *Cases and Materials on Evidence*, was frequently cited by courts and widely used in law schools. Among the numerous awards Mason received for his scholarly endeavors was the Fellows Research Award presented by Fellows of the American Bar Foundation for his extensive research in law and government.

Ladd was a master in the classroom. I first knew him as a student in his evidence class at Iowa. The joy and fervor that Mason brought to the law of evidence was catching and his students quickly became

immersed in the theory and rules of evidence. It was almost impossible not to learn with a teacher who was so inspiring. Some of the cases which were discussed will never be forgotten by his students. With his canes waving in the air, his discussion of the escapades of “Chiggers,” the mule, during his trip down the Grand Canyon was a classic.

Mason had a sincere interest in seeing his faculty succeed. In 1967, Mason hired me at the new law school at Florida State. I was more than a little nervous when Mason told his three new faculty that during the week before classes each of us would teach our first class to him as he sat alone in a classroom equipped for over 125 students. Although I was somewhat shaky asking Mason the hypotheticals that I intended to use in my first Torts class, he played the role of a student well and was full of praise at the completion of the hour. After that experience, my first hour in front of real students was anticlimactic.

Mason was proud of the law school he started at Florida State and worked hard to make it a success. The charter class was encouraged, cajoled, and made to work hard. He took a personal interest in his students. There were a number of students having difficulty in a course who were stopped by Mason in the hall, invited to his apartment for Sunday dinner, and told to bring their class notes. After the meal and visiting had been finished, the table would be cleared and Mason would spend the remainder of the afternoon tutoring. His interest in Florida State remained with him after he returned to Iowa. Shortly before his death, he helped with Florida State’s application to The Order of the Coif. He was proud and happy when our chapter was awarded.

In his free time in Tallahassee, Mason tried to swim daily and liked to fish for bass when he had the opportunity. He talked frequently about his farm outside of Iowa City and looked forward to returning. He enjoyed seeing his orchard bear fruit and driving his well cared for tractor over the fields. Mason was close to his family. His wife, Esther, was truly his partner in life. He was a man of strong moral conviction and character.

The law and legal education miss Mason Ladd. His personal traits together with his dedication, scholarship, and enthusiasm for the law serve as an exemplar for those who knew him.¹ He would be pleased that this lecture series endures in his memory.

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1. His scholarship has been cited almost 600 times in law reviews and journals since his death. *Tome v. United States*, 513 U.S. 150 (1995), is the most recent decision of the United States Supreme Court to cite Dean Ladd as authority.