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A Tribute to Theodore J. ST. Antoine

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TRIBUTES

A TRIBUTE TO THEODORE J. ST. ANTOINE

*Jeffrey S. Lehman**

The University of Michigan Law School was ninety-five years old when Ted St. Antoine first entered Hutchins Hall in 1951. In half as many years, he profoundly influenced the institution, its traditions, and its character.

Ted came west to Michigan after studying philosophy and theology at Fordham College in New York City. He came with the proven abilities of a *summa cum laude*. He came ready to engage what he considered a more practical challenge: he wanted to become a lawyer.

As a student, Ted's achievements became the stuff of legend. In conversations with his classmates, it is striking how many of them vividly recall incidents marked by Ted's brilliance, leadership, or modesty. Often as not, they mention all three.

A glimmer of these qualities can be gleaned from Ted's response to a 1951 placement office questionnaire requiring him to "[i]ndicate special qualifications — i.e., accounting, language ability, work done for professors, etc." Ted's apologetic response: "No particular skills — but: Law Review Editor-in-Chief; Campbell [moot court] Competition Winner." No particular skills, indeed.

Ted left Ann Arbor to serve in the JAG Corps and, after a year as a Fulbright scholar in London, to practice labor law in Washington, D.C. Over the course of seven years, he helped build the firm of Woll, Mayer & St. Antoine before accepting the call to join the Michigan faculty.

As a faculty member, Ted exemplified the same stellar qualities noted by his law school classmates. His incisive mind is manifest in the scores of pieces he has published exploring the employment relationship and in classroom lectures that have made him a favorite teacher for generations of students. His modesty has enabled him to be a superb mentor for younger colleagues. His leadership abili-

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ties ably served the school and the University during his extremely successful eight-year term as Dean.

My first encounter with Ted was during his last year as Dean, my first as a law student. That winter, ground was being broken on the construction of the underground wing of the law library, the Allan F. and Alene Smith Addition. I was living in one of the two sections of the Lawyers Club dormitory closest to the construction site. Needless to say, my dormmates and I were very unhappy when pile drivers began work outside our windows each morning at the unconscionably early hour of 7 A.M.

A delegation was sent to express our displeasure to the Dean. Ted listened sympathetically. He explained that our grievance was not with the Law School, but with our landlords, the University's housing division, which was managing the dormitory under contract with the Lawyers Club. He professed shock that the University had not given better notice to tenants of the construction. He arranged a meeting at which we could vent our anger and present our legal arguments to the University's General Counsel.

Ted was thoroughly attentive to our cause. He was profoundly sorry that we were being disturbed. He consoled us by explaining that future generations of students would surely rise up in gratitude to the noble 1978 occupants of Sections O and P, the heroes who had sacrificed their own serenity so that future generations might study. And — the coup de grâce — Ted searched and ultimately marshaled the resources to offer each of us \$100 from his most precious dean's discretionary fund, if only we would agree to relinquish our claims against the hapless University.

We declared victory and accepted Ted's offer. We told each other that there was good reason why he was known to students as "the Saint." And it took years for us to appreciate the smoothness and delicacy with which he had handled the negotiation, and just how completely we had been outnegotiated.

The example of Ted's attentiveness has stayed with me. And as I have come to know him better, my admiration has continued to grow. He has provided many opportunities for me to envy his intellect, his ability to turn a phrase, his humanity, his diplomatic talent, and his tact. Even more, I have come to appreciate that Ted is, at his center, an exceptionally selfless man. Throughout his career, Ted has served the Law School and the University in every capacity imaginable. Even as I write these words, he is chairing the search committee for a new University General Counsel. Indeed, I won-

der whether he is constitutionally capable of declining a request for help.

Ted has certainly never said no to me. In fact, he has been a steadfast friend to whom I can turn for help, with actions or with advice. I have come to treasure his handwritten notes marked "confidential" — I know that they will be forthcoming when I am in danger of doing something foolish, or when I need my spirits lifted.

As the history of the Law School is written, the name of Theodore J. St. Antoine will appear on many pages, in many capacities. Most often his name will be linked to achievements in faculty development, in fundraising, and in building construction. Similar successes will be attributed to others, for that is the way histories are written. In Ted's case, however, there will be more. There will be mention of Ted's human qualities, of his ability to inspire others through selfless devotion to the Law School, and to the people who pass through its halls.

No particular skills, indeed.