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## Dedication: Herschel Hugar Friday

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## **DEDICATION**

### **HERSCHEL HUGAR FRIDAY**

Herschel H. Friday died on March 1, 1994 when the plane he was piloting crashed upon landing at his Faulkner County home. At the time of his death, Mr. Friday was the senior and managing partner of the largest law firm in the State, Friday, Eldredge & Clark. Mr. Friday graduated from Little Rock Junior College, a predecessor of UALR, and the University of Arkansas School of Law. He was 72 years old.

These are the basic facts, but they fail to explain why the death of Herschel Friday was such a profound loss to the profession and, indeed, to the entire State of Arkansas. Some people who did not know Herschel Friday may assume that the outpouring of sympathy and tributes following his death simply reflects the fact that Mr. Friday represented powerful interests in this State. These are the people who did not know Herschel Friday. To be sure, Mr. Friday represented powerful and important clients—the Little Rock School District, the Union Pacific Company, and the Oaklawn Jockey Club, to name just three. But that is not why the local newspaper was filled with tributes following his death or why a column about Mr. Friday was written in the New York Times following his death.

Herschel Friday was quite simply a person of extraordinary decency, compassion, and kindness. I never saw him ruffled, angry, or discourteous. Even those people who opposed his clients' interest could find nothing uncomplimentary to say about Mr. Friday, other than that he aggressively represented his clients, hardly an insult for an attorney.

The dedication of the Herschel H. Friday Courtroom in our law school fewer than six months before his death was just the latest in a legion of honors Herschel Friday received. He received awards from Children's Hospital, the March of Dimes, and Easter Seals. He received an honorary degree from our law school and virtually every humanitarian and philanthropic award given in Arkansas. After his death, a railroad spur in eastern Arkansas was named in his memory by the Union Pacific Railroad.

Herschel Friday represented the Little Rock School District in the original desegregation law suits. It is likely that his representation of the School District cost him an appointment to the United States Supreme Court. However, when I talked to people who opposed Mr. Friday's possible Supreme Court appointment because of his representation of the School District, not one person could find

anything negative to say about what Herschel had done, other than that he aggressively represented his client. There was no suggestion of improper conduct, racism, or other impropriety on his part. I reflected on some people's perception of Herschel's attitudes when he would call me, privately, but regularly, to ask how the African American students were doing in our law school. We shared a commitment to making legal education available to black Arkansans, and he quietly helped us to achieve that goal. He asked me about enrollment, attrition, and, yes, he wanted to make certain that we referred the best students to his firm for clerkships and possible employment. At the time of the Courtroom dedication I asked Mr. Friday about his possible appointment to the Supreme Court and if he was disappointed that he was not nominated to the Court. He smiled and said, "It all worked out for the best." There was no bitterness or anger, just his gentle humor and kindness.

Mr. Friday served on the boards of various corporations including the First Commercial Bank, Dillards Department Stores, Southwestern Bell, and the Great Lakes Chemical Corporation. Indeed, he was flying home from a meeting of the Great Lakes board when he was killed. He also served on the board of Children's Hospital for more than 40 years. He was a former president of the Arkansas Association for Retarded Children. He was the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and chair of the UALR Board of Visitors.

There are few attorneys nationally who devoted themselves to the profession as did Herschel Friday. He was a former president and chair of the Executive Committee of the Arkansas Bar. He was a member of the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association at the time of his death and had previously served on the A.B.A. Board of Governors, and many A.B.A. committees, most dealing with professional ethics, competence, and continuing education. He was chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Bar Endowment, and was a fellow of the American Law Institute, the American Bar Foundation, the American Judicature Society, and the American College of Trial Lawyers. He received many professional awards, including the State Bar's Humanitarian of the Year Award which was accepted by Beth Friday at the Annual Meeting of the Arkansas Bar in June 1994.

Legal education was a special interest for Herschel Friday. He was truly one of the "godfathers" of our law school. It was through his efforts, along with others, that the state legislature was persuaded to establish a separate law school in Little Rock.

He chaired our fund raising campaign in 1992 and 1993, and was personally generous with his time and resources for the law

school. This law school had no greater friend than Herschel Friday. However, his dedication to legal education did not stop at UALR. He taught at the University of Arkansas Law School in Fayetteville in the early 1950's, he chaired the State Bar's Law School Committee, and he was committed to Arkansas having two strong and well-funded schools of law.

Herschel Friday was at a stage in his life and career when he could have walked away from the children, the disadvantaged, the disabled, and the minorities within our community—but he never did. He was generous with his money, his time, and his energy. In addition, he was self deprecating and uncomfortable with tributes. Although we moved into our new building in August 1992, it was not until October of 1993 that we dedicated the Friday Courtroom because Herschel was uncomfortable with the honor. Although he and his clients had been exceedingly generous to the law school and UALR, he told me repeatedly that honoring him was not necessary. It was only when his firm and clients requested such an honor that Herschel acquiesced. The one solace we had following his death was that he finally did allow us to dedicate the Friday Courtroom in October 1993.

Herschel Friday did not make it to the United States Supreme Court, but Arkansas is the better for it. The true measure of a person is what remains after his passing, and there are many testaments to the life and work of Herschel Friday. Children's Hospital, the North Little Rock yards of the Union Pacific, our law school, his law firm, the Oaklawn race track in Hot Springs, the legislation he drafted and shepherded through the state legislature, and the many Arkansans he touched directly and indirectly are just a few of Mr. Friday's legacies to the profession and State of Arkansas.

Mr. Friday is survived by his wife, Beth, two sons, and four grandchildren to whom we extend our sincere sympathy and love. We are proud to dedicate this issue of the *UALR Law Journal* to the memory of Herschel H. Friday, an honorary alumnus, a great lawyer, a distinguished Arkansan, and an outstanding individual.

HOWARD B. EISENBERG  
Dean and Professor of Law

