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LOUIS H. POLLAK

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When I first met Louis Pollak, in the Spring of 1957, he had recently returned to Yale and was teaching a course in federal jurisdiction in which I was enrolled. I remember him vividly, though the recollection comes easily because he has changed so little in the two decades since: spindly, slightly stooped, soft spoken, self-effacing, unflaggingly pleasant, unceasingly reflective, so terribly bright and yet, in deference to his unremitting quest for constitutional essence, always tentative in exposition.

His class was mostly colloquy. The man and the teacher were indivisible. He was so decent and kind, infinitely courteous and respectful to the participating student, always finding a kernel of redemption in the student's views, however off the mark they might be. How different he was from some of his counterparts of that day, those masters of socratic putdown. His own comments, so often accompanied by that quizzical and crinkled smile, were invariably cogent and pregnant with suggestion, yet stated with modesty.

He didn't care, it seemed, how many cases or subjects he covered out of the total course material. What was important was understanding, not volume, and so we spent days and days on the landmark case, distilling its substance, plumbing its depths, contemplating its every implication. What he sought, it is plain, was to give the student a sense of the spirit—and the genius—of the Third Article he loved so much, and of the possibilities ensnared therein. It is my perception that he succeeded in doing so.

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Those were halcyon days, before the litigation explosion in the federal courts. In retrospect, I believe that Lou Pollak saw it coming, and that, in his retiring way, he influenced some of the lawyers who broke new ground and helped to bring it about. Now, of course, he feels its impact broadside. Yet, notwithstanding the enormous burdens he must shoulder as a United States District Judge, I suspect that he will find the time to carry on his quest for constitutional essence and, through his judicial opinions, will continue to be our teacher. I also suspect that through the vehicle of those opinions he will, with that characteristic gentle prod, play a meaningful role in moving the ideal of constitutional government constructively forward.