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LEHAN K. TUNKS—A TRIBUTE

Allan Axelrod*

Lee Tunks came to New Jersey as Dean of the two Rutgers Law Schools (Newark and Camden) in 1953 and served until 1962. Rutgers Law School had been only recently created; it had come into being in 1948 (from the merger of several municipal and private schools) as the law school of the contemporaneously created state university, Rutgers University.

Lee's charge and purpose was to build a major state law school. He had to position the school as a high priority claimant upon university resources: to effect large increases in library collection and staff, to break his faculty's salaries free from the university pattern, to acquire research and administrative resources, all of which generated disputes within the university. He led the faculty to decisions that entangled the newly visible public institution in external fights with bar, alumni, or the legislature. There was one year in which Newark admissions standards were so boosted as to cut the entering class by almost 50%, and there was a several-year campaign to drop the school's evening division as beyond its resources. All these disputes were intensified by the dedication and passion with which Lee pressed his positions, but it was the same dedication coupled with a superior tactical sense which saw them mostly won on Lee's terms.

What kind of school would be created with the resources he wrested from the university; what would be done with the highly select student body he fought to achieve? Lee wanted that mixture of tough useful professional training and thoughtful scholarship that is legal education at its best. He had some talented faculty members when he came on, but he needed more people to do their own good work, to share in curriculum building, and to perform all the jobs that a strong faculty performs in creating a good school. He put enormous skill and energy into recruiting and worked to fire his recruits with his own enthusiasm, and build a faculty community built around a sense of shared purpose. A colleague of those days recently reminded me that Lee inspired perhaps more by example than by precept. The young faculty members were impressed and maybe a little depressed by the intensity and imagination that Lee brought to preparing and teaching his own Corporations course, and how he not only thought deeply into the language of the law, its conceptual structure, and its social determinants and consequences, but worked long hours to fuse all of that into a series of

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carefully crafted classes. The message was clear: the job is challenging, worthwhile, and exciting.

I hope I have given the picture of a talented or even brilliant educational leader, whose years here at Rutgers saw at least steady and often dramatic progress towards his goals. I add a couple of recollections of Lee's personal style, centered on his dazzling command of language. There was controversy inside and outside the school; Lee brought to the battlefield a quick wit that could slice off an arm, but he also could dispel tension through his sense of humor, which could warm you for a week. His verbal mastery enabled him to indulge a bizarre taste for baroque bureaucratese, so that our school did not have exams but "accountability exercises," and discussions of the length of classes or semesters dealt with "time containers." It was odd that he relished that kind of language; it was incredible that he could get others to use it.

He was an often exasperating and always stimulating person; we were lucky to have had him as dean and are still lucky to know him as friend.