Richard Remembered

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It is the little things I miss the most. For decades, as I sat in my L-shaped office in the Goldstar building, two staccato raps would echo off my bookcases, followed by a precise four-second pause, after which Richard would stride crisply around the corner of the L. The textbook of the day would be tucked smartly under his right arm. His chin would always be upthrust, capped with a mischievous grin, which would grow depending on the daily portion of grief I was to receive over politics, religion, or the law. It would be a mistake to interpret Richard’s grin as his acceptance of the status quo on any topic, especially legal education or the law school—his usual comment: “Dan, we can do better.”

Having literally lived his life in the law school, first as its “Boy Dean,” through his role as elder faculty statesman, to his current status as Professor (not-so-retired) Emeritus, Richard has been at once our most vociferous critic and our greatest supporter, never accepting the status quo, and always working to raise the bar to educate honest, talented, and idealistic attorneys. His quest for excellence continues as he teaches a new course in legal rhetoric during the spring.

Always the renaissance man, Richard’s high standards have even carried over to livestock production. A small, but delicious factoid regarding Richard is that in the early 80’s, during his gentleman farmer days at Wellston, he and Marilyn produced the most succulent mutton this side of Lebanon. The gastronomic high point of the Morgan year was a rack of lamb à la Coulson served just out of the oven. Alas, Richard and Marilyn gave up the farm and returned to the city. My taste buds will never be the same. I can still smell that lamb.

Regardless of his other pursuits, Richard’s true passion was always the law school. The generations of OCU lawyers educated by Richard are his precious gift and greatest legacy. His rigorous intellectual

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standards in the classroom and intolerance for poor preparation and sloppy analysis have inspired and reminded many an OCU lawyer to set high goals in the practice of law. They know that Professor Coulson will always be looking over their shoulders. Good enough is not acceptable. Do your best!

It is fitting for Richard to have addressed the 2008 OCU alumni luncheon at the Oklahoma State Bar meeting. Many people at that event were students and colleagues who have been challenged, inspired, and changed by Richard. We will never be content with the status quo. In our mind’s eye, we will see Richard, mischievous grin in place, reminding us that we always can do better.