Theodore Price Roberts A Tribute to Professor Theodore P. Roberts

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THEODORE PRICE ROBERTS

After thirty-seven years of service, Professor Theodore "Ted" Roberts retired from the faculty of the University of Oklahoma College of Law in May 2006. Retirement marked the formal culmination of his longstanding full-time commitment to the College of Law and the University of Oklahoma at large. These ties included Professor Roberts' undergraduate studies, where he received his B.S. in 1961, and his legal studies from which he received his J.D. in 1964. After graduating from the College of Law, he served as a County Attorney for Caddo County from 1964 to 1967. In 1967, he moved on to serve as Assistant District Attorney for Jackson County. He held this office until he joined the College of Law faculty in 1969, beginning a career that would eventually cover a span of four decades. A list of his contributions to the legal profession during this tenure is likely beyond number. Nevertheless, the breadth of Professor Roberts' career involvement in both the academic and practicing legal communities, and his enduring influence on his fellow community members, combine to provide perhaps the best example evidencing the profound impact of his service.

Professor Roberts' career in legal academia focused primarily on instruction in the area of advocacy. Trial Techniques, Civil Pre-Trial Litigation, and Practice Court were among the courses he taught at the College of Law. He taught some of the same courses as a visiting professor at both the Emory School of Law in Atlanta, and the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. He also served as faculty advisor to OU's National Trial Team from 1977 to 1998. Professor Roberts embraced the skills-based nature of these classes and competitions. His instruction centered on real-life application of lessons learned, and his teaching offered students the unique opportunity to hone their skills by putting them into practice under live, court-style settings. In addition to his role as an instructor, he also served in various administrative capacities, including Assistant Dean of the College of Law from 1969 to 1972, and both Assistant and Acting Director of Clinical Legal Education from 1972 to 1989.

In recognition of his outstanding skill and dedication as an instructor, Professor Roberts was named an Edith Kinney Gaylord Presidential Professor of Law in 2001. He held this professorship until his retirement in 2006. Professor Roberts was also a 1997 recipient of the University of Oklahoma Athletics Council Merit Award, a 1994 recipient of the University of Oklahoma Regents' Award for Superior Teaching, and a recipient of the Calvert Award for Teaching Excellence and Contribution to the College of Law in 1980, 1985, and 1986.

Professor Roberts' involvement in the practicing legal community paralleled the advocacy focus of his instruction. Since 1981, he has served as a professor and team leader for the National Institute for Trial Advocacy. He has lectured extensively on trial practice, evidentiary law, and expert witness
preparation. Among the organizations he has addressed are the Oklahoma Bar Association, Federal Aviation Administration, United States Postal Service, and various chapters of the American Inns of Court.

Professor Roberts continues to hold membership in the Oklahoma Bar Association, American Bar Association, Cleveland County Bar Association, and Luther Bohanon American Inn of Court. He has held leadership positions in each of these organizations, including election to the Board of Governors for the Oklahoma Bar Association from 1983 to 1985; appointment to American Bar Association law school site inspection teams in 1996, 1997, and 2002; election as vice-president and then president of the Cleveland County Bar in 1973 and 1974, respectively; and selection as the Bohanon Inn of Court program chair from 1986 to 2003, election as the Inn’s president from 2001 to 2002, and membership on the Inn’s Executive Committee from 1986 to 2007. In 1988, the Oklahoma Supreme Court appointed Professor Roberts to the Oklahoma Dispute Resolution Advisory Board, a role he continues to serve in to this day.

The aforementioned academic and professional accomplishments Professor Roberts attained during his career, however, reveal an honor even more unique than the diversity and distinction of his service. Through his involvement in the academic and practicing communities, Professor Roberts left an indelible impression upon those who he taught and upon those whom he practiced alongside. He imparted his passion for trial practice, his skill as an advocate, and his values aimed at upholding the nobility of the legal profession as part of every lesson, lecture, or meeting he attended. Over the course of his career, generations of students and practitioners he encountered adopted his lessons and made them a part of their practice. These lessons invariably shaped the face and character of trial practice and advocacy in Oklahoma and across the nation. This significant and lasting impact is the true legacy of Professor Ted Roberts’ career. The College of Law honors his service, as do all of those who know him as a professor, colleague, or friend.