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WILLIAM B. SPONG, JR.
*A Tribute from the
Scholar-in-Residence of the University of Virginia*

Dean Spong has served with great distinction as a practicing lawyer, a state legislator, a United States Senator, and a legal educator. In each of these activities he has demonstrated a truly outstanding gift of leadership—a gift that is a component of sound judgment, tact, integrity, quiet determination, an attractive personality, and a capacity for inspiring confidence.

I have been asked to comment on Dean Spong as a legal educator. This is a most congenial assignment for me because I know of no law school dean who has done as much for his law school as has Dean Spong in the relatively short time that he has served as dean. Consider these accomplishments: securing a handsome new law building equipped with all modern improvements for legal education; securing the installation of a chapter of The Order of the Coif; establishing the Marshall-Wythe School of Law Foundation, charged with the responsibility of soliciting gifts for the benefit of the law school; more than doubling the size of the law library; substantially improving the quality of the law school student body in terms of grade point averages and Law School Admission Test scores to the point that the Marshall-Wythe student body as measured by standard admission criteria has been listed among the top thirty-six law schools in the country; improving the faculty-student ratio from 1:24 to 1:20; and securing the increase in faculty salaries to the national median.

The really dramatic progress of the law school under Dean Spong's administration is further attested by the report of the Placement Office to the effect that the on-campus recruitment program last year had 117 employers from 23 states conduct in excess of 2500 interviews at the law school. In addition, more than 200 employers filed resumes with the Placement Office inviting students to apply for positions in their firms.

At least matching in importance the impressive list of accomplishments I have mentioned is the vital and intellectually exciting atmosphere now prevailing at Marshall-Wythe—an atmosphere reflective of the work-study attitude of the students toward their classes, of their enthusiastic support of co-curricula activities, such

as law review, moot court, and the program of the Marshall Fellows, who provide research support for the Virginia Bar Association, and finally of the relationship between the students and the faculty—a relationship of mutual esteem and respect dedicated to the study of law and understanding the role of law in contemporary society.

I suggest that the imponderables I have just mentioned along with the accomplishments I earlier discussed attest the truly brilliant leadership Dean Spong has provided the law school. In evaluating that leadership it is well to bear in mind that Dean Spong's interest in education antedates his Deanship. Thus he served as Chairman of the Virginia Commission on Public Education from 1958-1962, as a Trustee of Hampden-Sydney College from 1956-1975, as a Member of the Board of Visitors of the Air Force Academy in 1969, and as a Member of the Board of Visitors of the Naval Academy in 1970. These experiences combined with his experience in the practice of law and his service as President of the Portsmouth and Virginia Bar Associations provided him with a background assisting him in realizing his determination to make Marshall-Wythe one of this country's leading law schools. All interested in American legal education owe him a debt of gratitude for doing so.

John Ritchie III
July 1985