

January 2001

Remembrance of Professor David Gregory

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Recommended Citation

Gerald F. Petruccelli, *Remembrance of Professor David Gregory*, 53 Me. L. Rev. 6 (2001).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.mainerlaw.maine.edu/mlr/vol53/iss1/7>

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REMEMBRANCE OF PROFESSOR DAVID GREGORY

*Gerald F. Petrucelli**

David did not use words carelessly. He knew that words express ideas, and he cared deeply about ideas, especially ideas central to the work of lawyers and judges, the work of justice.

David was a lawyer before he was a teacher and he was a lawyer while he was a teacher. He was a lawyer in the highest and best sense. He respected the privilege we lawyers share, as officers of the court, to contribute directly to the administration of justice. He understood that justice does not come about simply because most of the people prefer it most of the time. He knew that justice requires careful, skillful attention to the details of problems to be solved and a sophisticated understanding of judicial remedies, a subject he taught many times, about the mechanisms that bring about just outcomes in real cases. He knew that it is both possible and necessary for lawyers to make a difference by doing their work carefully.

But most of all, David was a teacher. He was a teacher's teacher. I visited his office before class many times and I always learned something from our conversations. I missed that visit yesterday, and I will continue to miss those visits a lot.

He said that his objective was to get to the very bottom of the subject matter. And that was what he did, or continuously tried to do, every day. He never looked for shortcuts to the bottom. He knew it was not his job to make students feel good about themselves, but they came away feeling good anyway. He did not plan his classes to impress students or please them. He had only one objective: to help them learn. Nevertheless, by calling his students to the highest standards of professional excellence, and helping us rise to meet those standards, by calling us to the hard work of getting to the very bottom of the subject, he earned the respect and affection of hundreds of students, including his students who were also his colleagues on the faculty.

As his students, we can honor David's memory by emulating his example. We can care about justice for everybody, about values, about ideas. We can think clearly and speak plainly. We can work for justice carefully, thoughtfully, thoroughly, and passionately. We can do what he taught us to do.

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