

A TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR RICHARD GERSHON

*Nancy Zisk**

I am honored to write this tribute to Professor Richard Gershon. Richard touched many lives at Ole Miss, as he did everywhere he went, and, as I began to think about what to say about Richard, I worried that my words might be too cliché or too similar to what others might say about him. I then realized that all of us who were lucky enough to know Richard knew him in our, unique, way. I am confident that no one else can say that Richard was their brother-in-law, dean, mentor, and friend.

I met Richard when he was dating my sister. I was teaching as an adjunct professor at a law school in the District of Columbia at the time, and he was the first person who made me believe that I might find a job teaching full-time. Not long after that, the Charleston School of Law was formed, and the founders hired Richard to be the school's first dean. I applied and joined the tenure-track as the school's first Torts professor. Richard was quick to say that he had no voice in the hiring process, but it was he who gave me the confidence to apply.

Richard and I worked together for the next seven years, and through all those years, I saw how much he loved teaching and mentoring professors and students alike. He was loved by his students, and every professor knew that he would do whatever he could to support their work. He supported me by making me believe that I could teach, and, as I began researching and writing papers, that a law journal might actually be interested in what I had to say. There are other professors still working at our school and at law schools around the country who have said Richard did the same for them. Indeed, for all the years that Richard and I worked together, I watched as he supported all the professors and every student who came to our school.

He would be too humble to admit this, but Richard almost single-handedly created a vibrant, collegial school where students,

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professors, and staff believed they each played an important role in our school and that the dean had their backs. It may be a cliché, but it is true that Dean Richard Gershon made the world around him a better place with his unwavering support and kindness. He certainly changed my life, and for that, I will always be grateful.