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RANDOLPH THROWER—AN APPRECIATION

*James T. Laney**

Randolph Thrower towered among Emory alumni of the twentieth century. He was rightly celebrated for embodying the highest degree of professionalism, judgment, and character.

As an undergraduate in the early 1930s, he stood out among his classmates and was president of his senior class. He was one of a select cohort that went on from Emory College to Emory Law, among them Boisfeuillet Jones, Henry Bowden, and J. Pollard Turman. Later, together as trustees, they shaped Emory as an institution and imbued it with a moral tone that persists to this day. Randolph in particular embodied the very qualities that Emory seeks to inspire: intellectual excellence, the highest professional competence and practice, and a deep moral sensibility that gives tone and direction to all one's involvements and commitments. He was a premier member of that great era that enabled Emory to attain national stature.

Randolph's long life was itself an achievement of the highest order. Even while rising to the peak of his profession and heading up a nationally prominent law firm, he was the devoted husband of a wife he adored, an attentive and affectionate father and grandfather, an admired leader in the community, and leading trustee of many institutions.

No one can live to be 100 without a zest for life. That was evident in his enthusiasms, his wit, and his warm and engaging personality. For one so admired and esteemed, he was approachable and attentive. I sought out his judgment on an array of issues when I was president and was always grateful for his generosity in time and counsel.

After I retired from Emory, Margaret and Randolph were kind enough to include my wife and me several times while they vacationed in Highlands, North Carolina. Although well into his eighties, he would receive a large packet of papers every morning from his office by FedEx, which he seemed to dispatch effortlessly sometime during the day, probably while we napped! Then later it was his custom to take a dip in a pond there on the property fed by

* Dr. James T. Laney served as Emory University's president from 1977–1993, and as dean of the Candler School of Theology from 1969–1977.

an icy mountain stream, something I never dared hazard despite being a number of years younger. Now that's zest for life!

What made Randolph an iconic figure was his remarkable blending of character and professional expertise. His integrity could not be compromised. This was of course publicly displayed on the national stage when he, as Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service, was pressured by President Richard Nixon to use the Service for illegal purposes. That act of moral courage, at a time when our nation's very foundations were under attack, made him a hero, a role he had not sought and did not revel in, but which he richly deserved. I am certain that what was asked of him by the President was so alien to his very being that it was inconceivable. He was being Randolph; that was who he was. And that was the basis of his enormous strength, quiet but steel-like. His departure from Washington was a rebuke to those who would exploit power in defiance of the law.

That same strength was always at work in his practice of the law. He believed that the very heart of the law lay in the integrity of process, not bending law to expedient blandishments or pressures. This contrasts markedly with the current climate, where the influence of the market has turned much of the practice of law itself into a business. Again, Randolph countered that influence by being himself. It was not Randolph's way to crusade. It was his very presence and his embodiment of those classical values that exercised such a powerful influence on his firm and on the profession at large. Personally and professionally he was the personification of restraint. Honor was his second nature, the honor of a gentleman whose word was sufficient and whose very presence evoked the classical commitments of the legal profession.

His example is his greatest legacy, one that is embodied in the symposium named for him in the law school. When I once called the law a "noble profession," I had him in mind. Randolph received many much-deserved honors during his long career. In addition to receiving the Emory Medal, the university's highest award for service to one's alma mater, I was privileged to confer an honorary Doctor of Laws degree on him in 1984. He was most appropriately recognized by his peers when the American Bar Association awarded him its highest honor, the ABA Medal in 1993.

People of Randolph's integrity and honor are rare indeed, especially when coupled with such high professional attainment. I always felt privileged to be counted as a friend, and Emory is honored to have him among its most

illustrious alumni. We enshrine his memory with gratitude. He was the kind of person Emory aspires to graduate.