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EULOGY:
MAJOR GENERAL ALTON H. HARVEY
SOLDIER, LEGAL EDUCATOR, FAMILY MAN¹

Joseph Richard Hurt²

On Thursday, April 21, 2005, I received an unexpected telephone message from Lori Keeton, Al Harvey's stepdaughter, which sent chills over me out of fear of bad news about Al. Exactly four weeks earlier, I had received a call from one of my brothers, urging me to come home immediately as my father was unexpectedly in critical condition. He died two days later. Now I could face similar news about the person who shaped my career more than any other person—Al Harvey—my professional mentor, my encourager, my promoter, and my friend. Indeed, Lori was calling to alert me of Al's impending death and to ask me if I would deliver the eulogy at his funeral. I have never felt so honored and yet so humbled as I was by this request.

From this soldier, general and law school dean, I learned some of the most valuable lessons about leadership: (1) patience; (2) trusting one's instincts, or as Al put it, "trusting your gut"; (3) considering all sides of an issue or problem before making your independent decision; (4) that solving a problem can be accomplished more than one way—or in Al's vernacular, "there is more than one way to skin a cat"; (5) the art of mentoring—recognizing talent, then developing that talent through opportunity, responsibility, and support; and (6) affirming individuals and colleagues with whom you work and supervise. I draw on these lessons every day and the members of my senior administrative team at Barry University feel as though they know the "General" by virtue of the frequency with which I quote him or reference a lesson in leadership I learned from him. That is why whenever I make a decision that, upon reflection, appears to be wise, I always think of Al Harvey.

To understand Al, you have to know how he spent his life and what his priorities were: his love for his family, for his country, and for the rule of law, which he promoted both in and out of the military. Al was born on April 11, 1932 in McComb, Mississippi, where he grew up as the son of older parents. In 1951, he entered the military during the Korean War, where he served on the front lines of combat. Al's hands received frostbite in the cold Korean winters, which caused them to ache in cold weather for the remainder of his life—a frequent reminder of the pain and suffering of

1. This eulogy was delivered at the memorial service for Dean Harvey at Covenant Presbyterian Church on April 27, 2005.

2. Joseph Richard Hurt is Dean and Professor of Law at Barry University Dwayne O. Andreas School of Law. He was a member of the Mississippi College School of Law Faculty for twenty-one years, serving six of those years as Assistant/Associate Dean under Dean Alton H. Harvey. He succeeded Dean Harvey and served as Dean from 1991–98.

war. Following his active duty, he attended the University of Mississippi, where he earned both his undergraduate and law degrees. He returned to active military service in 1958 in the Judge Advocate General's Corp of the Army, where he served for the next twenty-three years.

For a lawyer in the military, Al developed a flawless résumé, serving as the Chief of the Criminal Law Division, the Chief of the Defense Appellate Division, the Assistant Judge Advocate General, and finally as T-JAG—The Judge Advocate General of the Army. Among the notable contributions of his military service were writing the final report to President Richard Nixon on the My Lai Massacre during the Vietnam War and cleaning up the West Point Cheating Scandal of the 1970s. Al became known as the “Silver Fox,” not only because of his prematurely gray hair, but also because of the swiftness and reliability of his instincts. Despite having served in the military at a time when soldiers and even officers were denied the respect and support they were due, Al was proud to have served his country in the Army. He loved and honored the soldiers with whom he had served for their sacrifices to protect liberty, freedom, and the rule of law. While dean of Mississippi College School of Law, Al would don his wool dress military uniform each Memorial Day to participate in the ceremony at the War Memorial in Jackson, often in ninety-plus temperatures. It troubled him deeply that Memorial Day was not an official holiday at the college, which eventually was changed due to his insistence.

Al took early retirement from his term as T-JAG and concluded his active military service in 1981 to become the third dean of Mississippi College School of Law, a position in which he served for a decade. Initially, the faculty was quite nervous about a general at the helm of the law school, but those fears soon dissipated as the “Silver Fox” proved to be a quick study. Under his leadership, the law school moved from provisional to full ABA approval and received membership in the Association of American Law Schools.

At the end of his first year as dean, Al tapped me to be his “second in command,” which did not appear to be a logical choice considering my youth and inexperience. Immediately, he gave me major responsibilities and set great expectations for me. He considered himself my “professional father,” particularly when he began a serious conversation with me by saying, “I am going to talk to you like your dad would.” I knew the conversation would be uncomfortable, but I also knew what he was about to say would be something I needed to hear. Al took this approach because he knew my father and the two of them respected each other immensely, and also because he knew the centrality of my father's influence on me. From Al, I also learned the importance of recognizing and affirming the faculty and staff who serve with you. After I completed my first year as his Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, Al sat me down to tell me what a great job I had done. His only concern was that he might be pushing me too hard and too fast, which he had often observed with young officers of promise in the military. He did not want me to be the rubber band that

was pulled so tight that it broke. As he looked toward his own retirement, he positioned me to succeed him, once he became convinced that I had sufficient steel in my backbone to make the tough decisions.

The true mirror of Al's soul, however, was his love for and devotion to family. His marriage to Jean, the love of his life, was the best thing that ever happened to him, enabling Al to enjoy the last eighteen years of his life as never before. The only time I ever knew Al to be late was to a dinner party Jan and I gave in his and Jean's honor, shortly after they married. Passing the point of being "fashionably late," they arrived almost an hour after everyone else. While they left home in plenty of time to be punctual, the two lovebirds were so caught up in conversation that rather than heading south on the Natchez Trace toward Jackson, they went north toward Kosciusko, a mistake that went unnoticed for thirty-five miles. Their romance only grew stronger with each passing year. Jean shared Al's interests, such as fishing off of oil rigs in Louisiana and water skiing, while she brought out his tender, compassionate side. The best example of this was his decision to move Jean's mother to Fort Myers, where she spent her remaining years close to them, with Al serving as her primary caregiver until she died.

Al's three daughters, Connie Denise, Paige, and Lori, each provided him with much joy and pride. Connie, whom Al called Dennie, was a chip off the old block. Al's fondest memories of his years at the Pentagon were of the weekends that the two of them spent in their mobile home on Chesapeake Bay. It was Connie who introduced her father to Jean and Connie who knew that her husband, Davor, was the right match for her because of Al's enthusiastic approval.

When Al and Jean married, her two daughters, Paige and Lori, became Al's daughters as well. His nickname for Paige was Sunshine, and family members mused at how much Lori became a carbon copy of Al. Taking Al as her role model, Lori graduated from law school and now is seriously contemplating a career in legal education. Talking with her is almost like having a conversation with Al.

While Al Harvey's legacy included reaching the pinnacle of success in two careers—the United States Army and American legal education—his lasting contribution is through the lives he helped to shape, both personally and professionally. So today, Al, as we celebrate your life, I want to thank you personally for seeing my potential; giving me opportunities to grow and develop; teaching me leadership by example; being my professional father; and, most of all, for helping me believe in myself.

