

## TRIBUTE TO JUSTICE CARRICO

*Victoria “Tory” A.B. Willis \**

I still wonder at the fact that Justice Carrico selected me as his law clerk. I have learned over the years that many of us felt the same way. We all secretly worried that he would suddenly realize he had made a mistake. But he never did. Having spent several years meeting his clerks, there is one thing that we all have in common: a deep and abiding love for him as a mentor in life. I have heard stories of the physical labors of past clerks—mostly from the male clerks and more than likely I suspect slightly embellished—and the often quoted line “and all other duties as assigned” whenever it might look that we would question the errand. And yes, I bought him Chinese food and delivered it to his home and other times joined him for dinner on many occasions. But again, these stories are all told with admiration for a person that was undeniably a great jurist, a wonderful father, a loving husband.

My first day was like those who had come before me and those that would follow—nerve wracking. I had woken early, gotten to my appointed parking space hours premature and spent entirely too much time wondering just exactly what I was supposed to do. To no one’s surprise, despite being early, he was already there. Somehow—and this part I cannot recall—I was summoned into his office for the daily morning ritual of opening the mail. During this time, he would laugh, tell stories, and read his mail. For those that do not know him, this may sound boring, but it was as lively and enjoyable as he was. It was a time for a personal connection and something that as the clerkship progressed I looked forward to every day.

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But on that first day, I was anxious and pondering what I should say. I looked around that massive office with the view of the Capitol and the wall of Virginia Reporters filled with law that I could never hope to know as well as he did. I noted the impressive array of framed documents each attesting to his legal skill and intelligence. For some unknown reason I glanced at his framed investiture and noted that the date of his investiture was January 30th. During a lull, I commented out loud that I was born on the day of his investiture.

“Oh really—you were born January 30th?” Too eager to be accurate I replied “yes and that year as well.”

Most of you can just imagine his face. He paused. He looked at Cathy Listander and then considered me for quite some time before he began shaking his head, and quietly said: “You know what that means don’t you?” I, of course, had absolutely no idea, but I rather suspected that I had simply blown it and might as well go back and pack my belongings up.

“It means that it is time for me to retire when my clerks were born on the day that I was sworn in!” And then he laughed as he broke into that wonderful grin—that grin with that twinkle in his eyes that lightened the mood immediately and let me know that it was going to be alright.

This was his essence, his ability to make a person feel welcomed and not simply as a guest but as a friend. I think that is why when he attended various non-legal events, he would introduce himself simply as “Harry Carrico.” He was always attentive to making people feel they had met a friend. For me, he was the finest friend I will ever have had the honor to have known.