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Tribute to Carl Hawkins

Mary Anne Q. Wood

I first met Carl Hawkins in a nondescript restaurant in Washington, D.C. during the fall of 1975, my last year at George Washington University Law School. Carl was on a recruiting visit to see if there was a possibility that my husband, Steve Wood, and I would join the law school faculty.

Carl was a mature man in his prime. Although he was standing in for Rex Lee as acting dean at the time, Carl had already enjoyed a full professional life. He had clerked for a Supreme Court Justice and practiced law before spending most of his professional career as a professor at the University of Michigan. While teaching at Michigan, he literally rewrote the analysis of tort law and served for a period as acting dean of that distinguished institution. He had also served at separate times as a president of two stakes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the “Church”), and, with his wife Nelma, was in the process of raising the last of their five children.

But, I knew little of this about Carl when I met him. He was wearing a tweed sport coat, which I subsequently learned was an important part of his wardrobe and, in many ways, communicated as much about the man as his credentials. Like the sport coat, Carl was warm and approachable. In our first meeting, Carl acted as interested in Steve and me as though we were his very first recruits, although in retrospect, he must have interviewed hundreds, if not thousands, of budding law professors. We certainly did not anticipate that over the course of the next few years, Carl would become one of the most significant mentors in our academic careers.

As has been said countless times, Carl’s role in the newly-minted law school faculty was as the senior faculty member. He served this role even while he was acting dean. As a practical matter, what this meant was that Carl taught the initial faculty how to interact as colleagues. Although never didactic, Carl taught the faculty by precept and example on how to function as a body—albeit one that did not agree on everything—and how to support each other as colleagues. He taught us to see ourselves as part of a faculty, rather than as individual faculty members. Becoming a cohesive faculty was

important in the early stages of the law school. In the mid to late 1970s, there were many dysfunctional law faculties. On some law faculties, the divisions were so great that the faculty members literally could not meet and refused to make new appointments to the faculties for fear of upsetting some tenuous balance of power. Carl's generous advice, collegiality, and respect for all faculty members permeated our law school faculty and made it a respectful, functioning whole.

Carl received the most naive ideas of the youngest faculty member as serious propositions, which deserved time and careful evaluation. As a result, the faculty adopted an attitude of respect for each other. At AALS meetings and similar meetings where a number of faculty were present, he always took the group out to dinner. We looked forward to these occasions as the highlight of any trip. Being together with faculty colleagues and listening to Carl and other senior faculty colleagues comment on the lions of legal education was always instructive and fun.

When I joined the faculty, one of my jobs was to improve the experience for women. Some women in the first few classes believed the law school was not welcoming to women. Carl told me that we could never solve a problem like this one without accepting the women's perspective as true. I believed the perception and reality would improve if we could increase the number of women attending law school, and I had an idea of how to accomplish that. With Carl's assistance, we instituted a series of lunch and dinner meetings with gifted young women across the BYU campus who had never expressed an interest in attending law school, but whose academic credentials indicated that they would be successful law students. We quickly increased the number of women attending law school to a critical mass. This provided women the opportunity to succeed and earn the respect of their male colleagues, some who previously believed a woman's place was only in the home. This success would never have been achieved without Carl's willingness to acknowledge the potential problem and work on a solution.

Carl's door was always open, and he was generous with his time, but I think I learned the most from Carl when I was invited to serve with Carl and some other members of the university faculty on a correlation committee for the Church. The group commuted to Salt Lake City together, a distance of about fifty miles. I sat and listened not just in the meetings, but during the commute as Carl and others

discussed the important issues facing the expanding Church, their own careers, and their relationships with their families. In these conversations, I learned about how much Carl loved Nelma and appreciated her skills as a homemaker and a mother. I learned about a serious illness he had experienced before joining the BYU faculty and which he believed had significantly diminished his intellectual capacity. (I do not know anybody who would have agreed with him on this point.) I learned about his and others' experiences in World War II and some of the disappointing, if not shocking, episodes he had witnessed. In short, I had the opportunity to learn how a lifetime of experiences had shaped the man and qualified him to help shape others as a husband, father, professor, colleague, church leader and friend.

Steve and I regard our association with Carl Hawkins as one of the most significant of our professional lives. We were blessed to know him.

