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In Memoriam: Charles W. Luther--The Unforgettable Professor

Clifford Stevens

University of the Pacific; McGeorge School of Law

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In Memoriam

Charles W. Luther

The Unforgettable Professor

Charles and I spent our first two years in law school together. Charles was the youngest member of our class. I was a young prosecutor when Charles opened his law practice in Sacramento's north area.

When I left the prosecutor's office, I joined Charles in his practice. We both taught law evenings at McGeorge. When the day law school started, Charles became Dean of the McGeorge Day Program.

Charles loved the practice of law and he loved teaching. He cared about both his clients and his students. If he had a weakness, it was that he cared too much.

Charles loved tough cases but with tough cases, often came difficult clients. Some of Charles' clients were emotionally disturbed. They had bounced from one attorney to another, finally finding a sympathetic ear in Charles. Once Charles took their cases, they wouldn't leave him alone. He was frequently bombarded with letters and telephone calls at all hours of the day and night.

Charles was also a bit of a workaholic. You would find him at the office in the wee hours of the mornings and on Saturdays and Sundays. The problem was that his clients expected to see him if he was at the office regardless if it was a Sunday.

Charles was also a great storyteller. His best anecdotes were always about himself. I remember he was working on a difficult appeal. The Appellate Court is concerned with the record of the Trial Court proceedings. Constant conferences with the client are of little help in an appeal. The attorney needs to be alone with the transcripts. Charles could not make this particular client understand this. If the client saw Charles' car in the parking lot, the client wanted to talk to him. Charles, on weekends, would park his car three blocks away and work in an inner office.

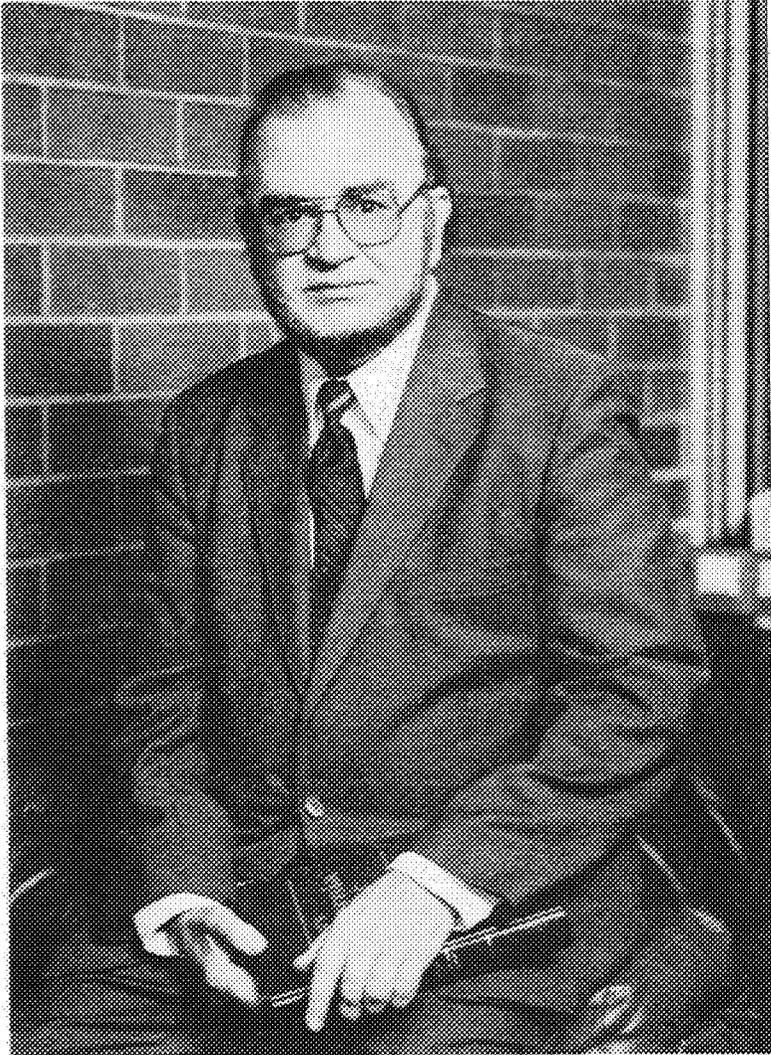
Charles told me about one Sunday afternoon. He was working on the appeal. His car was parked three blocks away. The lights in the reception area were off. There came this loud knocking on the door. "Mr. Luther, I know you're in there." It kept up for some time and finally stopped. Charles was supposed to be home for an early dinner so it was time to leave. Charles knew if the client found him there, he'd be an hour or so late. Charles crawled across the reception area so the client, if still there, would not see him. Charles figured he would look through the mail slot and see if the coast was clear. He slowly opened the mail slot, peeked out and saw another set of eyeballs! Needless to say, Charles was late for his Sunday dinner!

Working with Charles, I had some of my peak experience and most enjoyable times. Charles had a love for life and of people that exceed his well known love of animals.

We all miss him.

ALLAN B. O'CONNOR

Legal Educational Consultant



CHARLES W. LUTHER
1933-1989