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Justice Philip Halpern

Charles S. Desmond
New York Court of Appeals

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JUSTICE PHILIP HALPERN

OTHERS will limn Philip Halpern, the judge and lawyer, the teacher and scholar, the civic and community leader, the internationalist, the political and governmental expert. It is my privilege to attempt a crude and inexact portrait of Philip Halpern, the warm and lovable friend, companion and associate. There was always an appealing boyishness about him. If the word "childlike" were not inappropriate as descriptive of so sophisticated and complex a person, one could use it to describe his life-long attitude of eagerness and wonder. Life for him was discovery and every new discovery in his crowded, many-sided life brought him new joy and new appreciation of the ever-wonderful world. Learning never made him arrogant. Sophistication never made him cynical. Power and place never made him haughty. He liked people and trusted them, he saw good in them and spoke well of them. He had an endless store of stories and anecdotes and amusing recollections but none of them were bitter or cruel or bigoted. At home with crowds as with kings, there was never any fear that he would lose either virtue or the common touch.

I never knew anyone who took such delight in knowledge, in facts. His mind worked with blinding speed and it had to, for he read voraciously, incessantly, untiringly. Newspapers, journals of opinion, the latest books on anything and everything—all had to be read, enjoyed, talked about. But his top interest and best subject was law. Possessed of a remarkable memory, he was at home with the decisions of the English and American courts, old and new. I never knew anyone in law office, court or university who had so broad and inclusive a familiarity not only with holdings of the courts but with the thinking and writing and speech of the schoolmen of the law, and of the established and developing trends in the law. The speed and acuity of his thinking was matched by the speed and fluency of his speech. To hear him talk on any subject was a delight but to hear him argue an appeal was to witness an intellectual feat and to realize what advocacy can still mean even in these prosaic courtroom days.

In a way, these were surface manifestations, outward signs of an exceptional mind, a restless quest for learning, a noble desire to excel. But in his case there was something else behind and beneath the rare something that brings a man closest to the Divine plan for the world. The extra something was love, love not only for his family and for those close to him, but real, outgoing love of people and life and living. Because he loved people of all kinds and creeds and colors he was loved and admired by everyone. He brought color and warmth and beauty wherever he went.

To those who did not know him this may sound lyrical or sentimental or exaggerated. To me it is a feeble effort to put on paper, in memory of long years of association, a picture of a beloved friend.

CHARLES S. DESMOND, *Chief Judge*
New York Court of Appeals