

Spring 3-1-2005

Roger D. Groot: A Dedication, From the Students of VC3

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Recommended Citation

Roger D. Groot: A Dedication, From the Students of VC3, 17 Cap. DEF J. 279 (2005).

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/wlucdj/vol17/iss2/2>

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From the Students of VC3

Our first experience at law school was listening to Professor Roger Groot speak during the first-year orientation. He told us that when we graduated we would represent people in a wide range of cases: from closing million dollar deals to writing wills, from defending a simple driving under the influence case to mounting a capital defense. Regardless of our own thoughts on the gravity of the case, it would be the most important thing in that client's life, and he or she deserved the best representation we could provide.

Professor Groot set a high standard for our class, as he does for every class. But he did not ask anymore from us than he has given in his career. His reputation as a great scholar, a bulwark of the Washington and Lee faculty, and a capital defender is well known.

What is less well known are the small contributions he has made to the community. Many new Washington and Lee law students have had the somewhat unsettling experience of meeting a local Lexingtonian and learning that he or she was a former client of Professor Groot. Brave students occasionally ask in what capacity Professor Groot represented this person and fully expect to hear the details of an (apparently successful) defense of a grisly murder charge. These law students are usually shocked to hear a much more mundane answer such as "he drafted a will for me when I couldn't afford to pay anyone to do it," "he presided at my wedding ceremony," or "he helped me out when he was on the Buena Vista town council."

He has used his considerable talents to help in countless modest matters. Yet in those instances he has shown no less care or vigor than those familiar with his scholarship or capital defense representation would expect. This corner of the world is a better place for Professor Groot having practiced law here.

Moreover, he has inspired generations of law students to emulate his example in their own practices. Not everybody will contribute by defending a capital case or writing leading scholarly commentary. However, we can all try to do the little things to provide help to those who desperately need it in a skillful and professional manner. Those who have followed Professor Groot's example have made their corners of the world better places as well. Perhaps they are his greatest legacy. As we, the students of VC3, prepare to embark on our own legal careers we hope to follow that tradition. It is a lofty standard, but Professor Groot has inspired us to reach toward it.

