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Tribute to Chief Justice Michael Wolff: Reminiscences of a Faculty Colleague

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**TRIBUTE TO CHIEF JUSTICE MICHAEL WOLFF:
REMINISCENCES OF A FACULTY COLLEAGUE**

ROGER L. GOLDMAN*

I have had the good fortune to be a colleague of Mike Wolff during the entire time he was a professor at Saint Louis University School of Law from 1975 through 1998. We shared a background in legal services, both taught civil procedure, attended numerous faculty meetings together, and served on innumerable law school committees. The breadth of his legal knowledge was extraordinary, in terms of the substantive areas in which he taught, practiced, and wrote. Few law professors have ever had such a wide variety of legal positions: he clerked for an outstanding federal district court judge; he worked as a staff attorney and director of legal services programs; he handled trials and appeals; he served as chief and special counsel to Governor Carnahan; and he helped settle the St. Louis and Kansas City desegregation cases. He traveled around the state to all its counties when he twice ran for Missouri Attorney General.

While at the School of Law, he developed an innovative sentencing seminar, attended by both students and trial judges. Only one other law school at the time had such a seminar. Mike's personal qualities were as outstanding as his professional qualifications. He has a keen sense of ethical behavior and an ability to keep confidences. His sense of humor often broke the tension at faculty meetings. And his utter lack of pomposity endeared him to colleagues, staff, and students.

For Mike, public service was an obligation, so it was no surprise when he told me in 1998 that he planned on becoming a candidate for a vacancy on the Missouri Supreme Court. When Mike was chosen by the Appellate Judicial Commission and then selected to the court by Governor Carnahan in the fall of 1998, just two weeks before the start of the fall term, it was a particularly unfortunate loss for me—I had just been appointed Interim Dean and Mike was scheduled to teach both sections of civil procedure to first-year students. But I did find a colleague willing to pinch hit at the last moment, so I was able to forgive Mike and, in fact, became excited about his new opportunity. Like two other former School of Law faculty members who joined the Supreme Court,

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Charlie Blackmar and Joe Simeone, Mike had achieved the highest honor that could be bestowed on a lawyer in our state.

Mike's skills at the School of Law have served him well as a judge and will serve him equally well as Chief Justice. Just as the Law School had the benefit of Mike's presence for twenty-three years, litigants, lawyers, fellow judges, and all Missourians will now see those strengths in him as Chief Justice. He has the three W's that will ensure his success as Chief Justice of our state: wit, wisdom, and warmth. He is genuinely concerned with the well-being of everyone, from janitors to governors; legislators will find him to be a true public servant, loyal to the institution he serves. Mike Wolff will be a Chief Justice for all.