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To Reed Dickerson: A Tribute to the Master

FRANK P. GRAD*

It was in the fall of 1955, almost twenty-five years ago, at the annual meeting of the National Legislative Conference, that I began my professional acquaintance and association with F. Reed Dickerson. He was just winding up his major revision of Title 10 of the United States Code, and I was about to start a major substantive revision of my own. I had never done a major revision before, and I anxiously sought the guidance of the Master.

The Conference was held at the old Hotel Roney Plaza in Miami Beach, and I treasure the photograph of Reed Dickerson, Henry Rowe, Jack Kernochan and myself, with palm trees and sandy beach in the background. The Roney Plaza has long ago yielded its eminence to newer and glossier hotels, but the rest of us are still going strong, teaching and practicing in the field of legislation. All of us were quite junior at the time, and though we clearly have not gotten any older, we have since achieved high academic rank, and Henry Rowe, the British member of the group, is now Sir Henry, and heads the English parliamentary drafting services. I still remember the balmy ambience of the Roney Plaza, as indeed, I remember the help Reed Dickerson gave me in getting started and in planning my revision project. His instruction was conveyed most generously and pleasantly in discussions in meeting rooms and on the beach, and in the course of my subsequent visit to his "revision

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plant" in the Pentagon. In those pre-computer days, a proper revision plant consisted of hundreds of index file drawers and tens of thousands of well-organized file cards.

It is difficult to accept the fact of Reed Dickerson's retirement, and I reject it as inherently improbable. I have had numerous and regular professional contacts with him since the days on the beach, and it was my impression—based on his productivity, his sharp and analytical outlook, his enthusiasm for law and the teaching of legislation, and his youthful attitudes—that he had managed the trick of rejuvenation, or, at least, of making time stand still. I expect him to continue running lively conferences on legislative drafting—such as the notable ones in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1975, and in Washington, D.C., in 1971. I also expect him to continue as the "consultant" of the American Bar Association Committee on Legal (formerly Legislative) Drafting. "Consultant" indeed! All of us who served on the Committee always knew that Reed Dickerson really ran the show, and that the designated chairmen who came and went were just there to meet the technical requirements of the American Bar Association.

All of us in the field owe a great deal to Reed Dickerson. Most law books have a very short half-life, and unlike Reed Dickerson's works on legal and legislative drafting, they don't age well. But Reed Dickerson's major works¹ continue to be sound guides to legislative drafting, solid works of reference and a source of despair to all of the upstarts in the field who try to say something new or significantly original.

Reed Dickerson and I have occasionally had differences of opinion on the place of research in a course on legislative drafting, and I have occasionally shocked the Master by suggesting that legislative drafting could be taught without an overhead projector. I also wish that his book on the interpretation of statutes² would allow greater scope for the use of legislative history. But these are mere quibbles from an otherwise devout disciple.

I repeat that I don't really believe in Reed Dickerson's retirement. I suspect that his purported retirement is merely a career change to allow him to do more of the same. I know that I look forward to many more works with the Dickerson imprimatur, to

1. R. DICKERSON, *LEGISLATIVE DRAFTING* (1954); *THE FUNDAMENTALS OF LEGAL DRAFTING* (1965).

2. R. DICKERSON, *THE INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF STATUTES* (1975).

many more well-crafted and elegant drafts of legislation, and to many more meetings and discussions of our field, whether on the beach in Miami, in meetings of the American Bar Association, in lecture rooms at Indiana University, Bloomington, or in the most hospitable Dickerson living room.
