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JOHN W. REED

*Wilbert J. McKeachie**

John Reed is a man of many talents, and I have been fortunate to have benefitted from them. He joined the First Baptist Church Choir as a tenor shortly after coming to Ann Arbor, and it soon became clear that he not only had an excellent voice but was also someone with excellent musicianship. Within a year we discovered that he could conduct, and in the ensuing forty years, except for interludes during sabbaticals or his stint as Dean in Colorado, he has been our choir director. He instituted a Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols which has become a traditional contributor to the spirit of Christmas for many Ann Arborites. I have sung in choirs and glee clubs for over fifty years, and I regard John as one of the best directors I have sung under even though most of the others were full-time professionals. It is not just that John has good musical taste, but that he has the patience, good humor, and perseverance necessary to help a nonprofessional group achieve high standards of performance. He has an anecdote for every occasion, and whether they are old or new, his telling brightens their humor.

John's store of jokes also stands him in good stead as a committee chairman. During the last forty years we have served on innumerable committees together, both in the University and nationally. John is always well-prepared. His meetings move to decisions with little waste of time; conflicts are resolved with rational problem solving; committee members develop a sense of comradery.

John has been called upon time and again to chair committees to deal with serious University problems and he has met the challenges successfully. When he was asked to chair the Board of Student Publications in the early 1950s, the *Michigan Daily* was in dire straits both financially and politically. John spent countless hours hiring a full-time accountant, working with the student editors and business staff to put the paper on a sound financial basis, and fending off those who wished to impose prior censorship on the content of the *Daily*.

One of the more colorful incidents involving the *Daily* grew out of the escapades of a student who took on the role of Pope Innocent III, and held court, complete with candles and incense, in his West Quad

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room. I well remember that my Psychology of Religion class was invaded one day by a page bearing a scroll commending me for my Godly work and offering me indulgences for past and future sins. Obviously Pope Innocent III was newsworthy and the *Daily* printed an account of his activities. The story so incensed one of the University's most prominent Flint alumni that he not only protested to the President and Regents but threatened political action to have the *Daily* banned. Fortunately John's calm good sense prevailed and the *Daily* maintained its independence.

His colleagues in the Law School are no doubt better qualified than I to speak to John's qualities as a law professor, but I was particularly pleased to hear a tribute from Otis Smith, our former regent. Mr. Smith invited me to ride with him from National Airport to the White House, where we had been invited to a reception celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*. I asked Mr. Smith if he knew John Reed. "Oh certainly," he said, "John is one of the best known law professors in the profession. There is no one in America better than John as a speaker to lawyers at professional meetings."

More recently John guided the University Musical Society through the once-in-a-lifetime transition from one director to another. From all accounts the search for a new director was successfully completed and the relationship between the outgoing director, Gale Rector, and the incoming director, Ken Fischer, has been warmly collaborative.

As a prominent American Baptist layman, John has been called upon for critically important leadership going well beyond his duties as a choir director. He has been chairman of the group responsible for the annual University of Michigan conference on teaching ethics and values. This conference, honoring Jitsuo Morikawa and jointly sponsored by Ann Arbor churches and the University, has each year drawn over two hundred faculty members into discussions of the place of values in the University.

Baptist ministers are not well paid. When I served on the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of the American Baptist Churches, we had active ministers whose full-time salaries were only \$3500 a year and many annuitants never reached a salary that high. Thus the annuities received were often well below the federal poverty line. Under John's leadership the Board not only supplemented annuities to bring retirees' incomes above the poverty level but also initiated a program to provide matching funds to assist churches in bringing their pastors' salaries to a livable level.

The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board has not only been a

fiscally successful insurance institution but has also provided leadership for the denomination in meeting the challenges of social change. As Chairman, reelected time after time, John has initiated and supported the Board's moves to take a socially and fiscally responsible position on investments, to support ministers whose social activism led to conflict within their congregations, and to meet individual personal and financial crises of the annuitants as well as of active ministers.

Choir practices, committee meetings, and church activities have buttressed the more fundamental aspect of my relationship with John — deep, abiding, personal friendship. Through forty years he has been a valued counselor, as well as a warmly supportive, and always understanding, friend.