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### Henry F. Johnson, Professor of Law (1981-2008), St. Mary's University School of Law

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**HENRY F. JOHNSON, PROFESSOR OF LAW (1981–2008),  
ST. MARY’S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW**

**BONITA K. ROBERTS\***

A number of years ago, Judith Viorst wrote about a family dealing with loss, and the book’s theme was embedded in the title: *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*.<sup>1</sup> The idea was for the family member to share ten good things about Barney, the deceased family cat, at its funeral. Because Henry Johnson (1942–2008) loved animals so much, particularly cats like Barney, this eulogy honors him by focusing on ten good things about Professor Johnson.

The first good thing about Henry involves the importance he placed on good writing. As a former English teacher, he valued clarity and precision in prose, which was reflected directly in his own writings.<sup>2</sup> His prose was straightforward and clean, easy to understand and, like anything that seems effortless, the result of hard work. His belief in good writing was reflected in another good thing about Henry: the importance of strong organization. Anyone visiting Professor Johnson’s office could see on his work table the materials for the article he was writing. The materials were arranged in an orderly manner, and his longhand rough drafts were astonishingly free of errors or changes. These strengths lead to another good thing: Henry brought these combined attributes into the classroom, emphasizing the orderly

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1. JUDITH VIORST, *THE TENTH GOOD THING ABOUT BARNEY* (Book Wholesalers, Inc. 2002) (1971).

2. For examples of Henry’s writing, see Henry F. Johnson, *Those “Golden Parachute” Agreements: The Taxman Cuts the Ripcord*, 10 DEL. J. CORP. L. 45 (1985); Henry F. Johnson & Paul Bartlett, Jr., *Is a Fistful of Dollars the Answer? A Critical Look at Dissenters’ Rights Under the Revised Model Business Corporation Act*, 12 J.L. & COM. 211 (1993).

approach of the application of law to the facts in an understandable manner born from the adherence to relevant code provisions. His examinations were challenging and consciously geared to the bar exam.

Henry Johnson's life was not, of course, exclusively focused on the law; he brought his appreciation of detail into other aspects of his life. Another good thing about him was his zest for travel and knowledge of the travel business. Because his wife Carolyn worked for Pan American Airlines for many years, Henry traveled with her frequently to various parts of the world. As a consequence, he could share his knowledge of many countries and the ways to get there in voluminous detail. That love of travel extended to the cuisines and wines of many cultures. Those friends fortunate enough to travel with Carolyn and Henry were the joyful recipients of personal tours of the destination, including the best restaurants and wineries in the area.

No description of Henry Johnson would be complete without emphasizing another good thing: his love of golf. As part of his travels, he was fortunate to play a number of nationally and internationally known golf courses. Those who knew him also understood that he would share at the end of any golfing day a summary of each hole, along with its challenges and topography.

The most important things about Henry centered around the way he cared for his family, friends, and animals. Everyone who knew him well understood his love for animals. He and his wife had a number of pets over the years who enjoyed their devotion and attention. During his early years on the faculty, he and Carolyn would come to campus during the holidays to ensure that the cats who lived around the law school structures had enough to eat. His devotion to his relatives and friends was likewise notable. He would do anything to help, whether it was tending to pets, plants, or houses in his friends' absence. Similarly, he took good care of his and Carolyn's relatives over the years. His care for his grandmother and Carolyn's mother manifested itself over the last twenty years through countless trips to help them as they aged.

Finally, the tenth good thing about Henry was his devotion to his wife Carolyn. In his early years at St. Mary's, he talked about her frequently, but because she traveled so much in her work, no one met her for quite a while. The faculty joked about his many references to the elusive Carolyn, and one faculty member even

humorously accused him of inventing her. She is, of course, delightfully real and was his lodestar. If he were here now, he would expect his friends to do what he would do for us: help her during this difficult time. Those of us who were his friends owe him no less and will undertake that effort because we too care for her, and honor his memory by doing so. It was a privilege to share with you just ten good things about Henry Johnson.