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Alvin Benjamin Rubin: One of Ten*

*Charles Clark***

Myth holds that in every age ten strong people support the earth. Our meeting tonight celebrates one of them. If I can make him as real for you as he is for me, this evening will be a success:

Fifty years ago he sat where you sit. He was first in his class and Editor-in-Chief of the Law Review. After four years of service in the Army in World War II, he came back to Baton Rouge to marry Janice Ginsberg, begin his law practice, and start forty-five years of teaching law in class and in court. After twenty years of practice, and two sons, Michael and David, he became a judge of the Eastern District of Louisiana; eleven years later he was elevated to the Fifth Circuit where he served fourteen years. This capsule history touches only a few way-points in a life filled with excellence in its every aspect—a life filled with the rapture of being alive—a life that inspired the meek and the mighty.

This chronology alone could be a satisfactory store of achievement for many men. For Alvin Rubin it just creates a brief outline of his journey. It is the way he traveled that signifies. Let me evoke the words of his friends to describe how he was perceived. He was a:

- Scholar
- Leader
- Superb litigator
- Outstanding judge
- Powerful writer
- Careful listener
- Man of charm, grace, and class
- Renaissance man
- Man who excelled in the art of living

These are some of the adjectives they ascribe:

- Brilliant
- Compassionate
- Courteous

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* This article was reproduced from a speech presented by Judge Clark at the annual Louisiana Law Review Banquet held on April 4, 1992, in honor of Judge Alvin B. Rubin. (Only minor editorial revisions have been made.)

** Chief Judge (Retired) United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Judicial Circuit.

- Persuasive
- Self-controlled
- Profound
- Free of vanity
- Courageous
- Cheerful
- Considerate
- Faithful
- Gentle
- Warm
- Unique

Does he sound too good to be true? Were the perceptions of these people who knew him best overstated? Were these part-time traits? No. There are in this room tonight other witnesses who will assure you they are true, were ever-present and, if anything, are less than descriptive of this inspiring man who is very much in our hearts and minds today.

Man always lives in time. Only the interval changes as you age. When you were young, each day was the interval of importance. Now, most of you think in terms of a semester or school year. Later, the span will increase and then you will add reflection to the perception of your place in time. Alvin Rubin lived his life fully in each of these zones. In every one he said "yes" to life, experienced it to the fullest and always gave it his best. In some men this constant quest for excellence can be irritating to those of us who occasionally coast. Not so with Alvin. He cared for people—all people. As Judge Tom Reavley put it: "He looked down on no one, even though we all looked up to him." His inspiration was compelling, but never demanded.

During the last two years of his life, he was engaged in a tenacious battle with a pernicious cancer. This was not a morbid period. Alvin kept his usual busy schedule of judging, teaching, learning, and traveling. Indeed, only close friends were aware that the battle was being lost. Many who were with him just weeks before his death were shocked to learn of it.

You don't have to be a full-time Alvin Rubin to let his example better your own life. He would be the first to say: "Take a little or a lot. Help yourself." That is exactly what he wants you to do. He helped hold up the world while he was alive. That same grace and strength can help us today. All we have to do is adopt some part of the life he lived so well.