

FOREWORD

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Thomas F. Eagleton was an original. Many found him to be one of the most compelling and admirable people they had ever encountered. That was certainly my experience as I came to know him during the last few years of his life. And he certainly made a strong, favorable impression on the students we taught together at Saint Louis University School of Law in our seminar on the Presidency and the Constitution.

Members of the *Law Journal* decided in late 2006 to honor his fifty years of public service by dedicating an issue of the *Law Journal* to him. Senator Eagleton's humility imposed two constraints on the project. First, the issue had to be a surprise; if he knew what was planned, he would likely have tried to stop it. Second, tributes had to be kept to a minimum. He would enjoy a volume which discussed some issues of importance to him; he would be embarrassed by one celebrating his accomplishments. Some of his admirers and friends were approached and agreed to write, generally about a public issue of concern to him.

Senator Eagleton's death intervened on March 4, 2007. The *Law Journal* decided to go forward with the volume, but as a memorial to him and his public service. The profound sense of loss caused some to offer tributes to a man they admired and loved. The *Law Journal* also got permission to print some of the eulogies which had been delivered at his memorial service. Others preferred to recall some important aspect or event in his career. And others elected to honor his memory by shedding light on some issue that engaged him.

What follows are contributions from twenty-one of Tom Eagleton's friends and admirers. Most served with him, worked for him, or observed him and were inspired by what they saw. Some were government servants, others scholars, others lawyers. Some knew him intimately for most of those fifty years; others had shorter or more passing associations with him. More would have liked to participate than space would accommodate.

Much of the public still recalls Tom Eagleton as the person who was dropped from the ill-fated Democratic ticket in 1972 after disclosing his past treatment for depression. For many of those outside of his home state of

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Missouri or for those who did not know him well that single event has tended to eclipse a remarkable career of service.

That is unfortunate. This Foreward is not the place to provide a more complete, and less critical, account of those events than is generally told. In any event, the Eagleton vice-presidential candidacy represented only eighteen days of a fifty year public career. During that career, Tom Eagleton made his mark as an honest, able, and effective elected official at the local, state and national levels; as a legislator who helped end the war in Vietnam, who strove to bring presidential war power within constitutional bounds, who helped write significant legislation regarding the environment, education and senior citizens, and who commanded the respect of colleagues on both sides of the aisle for the service they witnessed day in and out; and as a selfless civic leader.

We live in an age which provides precious few models of political leadership. Increasingly, public officials communicate with slogans rather than reasons and make decisions based on expediency rather than principles. Complicated issues are reduced to simplistic formulas; politicians posture for the camera and conform to safe and conventional positions rather than take the risks governing requires.

That was not Tom Eagleton's way. The contributions which follow depict a leader whose career followed a different pattern. He was proud of his vocation as a politician for he appreciated politics as the way in which the people's business got done. As such, he recognized the value of compromise as an often necessary strategy to advance the public welfare. Yet he believed that fundamental principle was worth defending and integrity was a requisite to effective public service. And he was not afraid to approach a problem from a different angle than did his colleagues, even if that orientation left him in an exposed and lonely position before the unforgiving judgment of the electorate and of history. Finally, as the following essays suggest, Tom Eagleton brought inimitable qualities to the table—empathy, generosity, humility, intelligence, energy, drive, and an irrepressible sense of humor which he aimed at himself as well as all around him. Those characteristics helped make him the leader he was and the person we so loved and admired.