

MEMORIAL: RICHARD L. BARNES

*Michael J Gorman**

I find this a tiresome exercise. I have during the last fortnight attempted to finish this project but with each attempt I am left unsatisfied. My stomach churns as I ponder the most vexing query: How does one encapsulate in a few paragraphs the impression created by a teacher, a mentor, and a good friend? Anyone who knew Richard in life would understand my difficulty—and my reticence in sharing with others what I loved about him.

It is hard to capture Richard's humanity with words. It would be infinitely better to have witnessed the many unsolicited acts of kindness or the many unexpected smiles that Richard shared with strangers, his students, his friends, with everyone really. I struggle. I ask myself: How can a few words here sum up Richard's effect on my life? Can I truly describe the bonds of friendship formed on the many bike rides we shared? Or, in my weakest moments in Oxford, the safety and reassurance Richard so freely gifted me?

My attempts to describe these acts have failed. They will continue to fail. I cannot command the English language with the requisite precision. Nothing I have written or will write here can create in your mind the perfect image of Richard in life.

So, I find writing this tiresome. Even though I am a lawyer, an artisan of language, for whom the written page is a welcoming canvass, I am at a loss. I should be able to accomplish this project like the many hundreds before it. I should have no difficulty in writing volumes about Richard, cataloguing his virtues and accomplishments. But, each draft has been a failure. As I think now more about Richard, our friendship, and how often I miss him, I realise the futility of my task. Yes, I am now convinced that without knowing Richard one can never realise the

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man he was and the example he set. (For those who will never have that chance, I am truly sorry.)

In the end, the greatest memorial that I can offer to my friend is the acknowledgement by me that his life defies words. He was simply too sublime to be painted.