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## TRIBUTES

### PROLIFIC: A TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR R. GEORGE WRIGHT

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How does one start when writing a tribute for George Wright? In so many aspects of life, George is simply prolific—the number of subjects on which he is knowledgeable, the quantity of articles he has published, his untold acts of kindness, his unflagging support of students and colleagues. And much, much, much more. “Well, shucks,” as George might say. Perhaps that should be the theme for this Tribute: George Wright is *prolific*!

It is hard not to look back at George’s forty-plus years in academics without noting the sheer volume of his written work. I am not sure if anyone keeps a list, but few legal scholars have published more than George Wright. George’s work is also fun to read. Perusing anything George writes is like having a conversation with him. His pieces are thoughtful, often infused with a touch of whimsy, and always make you think. It is no understatement to say that George is among the leading scholars of his generation.

But I will let others elaborate on George’s impact as a scholar. Because focusing *only* on his scholarship would vastly underestimate George’s influence on those around him and who he is as a person. George Wright is every bit as prolific in his humanity as he is at producing scholarship. And I would assert that George’s prolific kindheartedness is ultimately even more important than his impressive body of published work.

I started my academic career in the early 1990s at Samford University’s Cumberland School of Law. I was not quite thirty years old at the time and had the privilege of joining a highly supportive faculty. I felt comfortable in my new environment and enjoyed the classroom right away. However, I was less confident about entering the marketplace of ideas through my scholarship. Enter George Wright. Even though George had arrived at Samford only six years before me, he seemed like a towering figure at the time—and not just because he was tall. George was always in the building, always available, and stood out as the model of an engaged scholar. George probably does not even remember this (because it is routine for him), but he was the first person with whom I

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shared a draft of a law review article. The topic did not seem in George's wheelhouse, so I hoped for general comments within a few weeks. Well, the *very next day* after I gave George my draft, I received the manuscript back, filled with handwritten suggestions, both substantive and stylistic, plus genuine encouragement about what I was doing. It meant the world to me, and it started a decades-long habit of leaning on George Wright to provide both insight and a morale boost on almost anything I did. How lucky I have been to find someone like George as a colleague.

As it turned out, George and I remained colleagues for a long time. I left Cumberland to join the Indiana University McKinney School of Law faculty in 2000. The following year, George confided in me that he would be interested in making a similar transition. George was an alum of the school (and a former editor-in-chief of the *Indiana Law Review*). Indiana was also home to his late wife, Mary, which made a transition appealing professionally and personally. I served on the IU McKinney faculty appointments committee during my first year there and could barely contain my enthusiasm for having George join us. Thankfully, my new colleagues saw the light and extended an offer to George to become a member of our faculty. Ever since, the IU McKinney community has been better because of his presence. To me, it also meant that—with just a brief intermission—I got to be faculty colleagues with George Wright for more than thirty years!

Thinking back over those years brings a flood of memories. Here are a few in no particular order—and friends of George will appreciate the rapid-fire presentation, jumping from topic to topic.

- I think of George in his office, students flowing in and out, George talking to them about everything under the sun while nibbling on Cheetos or some other unhealthy snack food.
- I remember George walking into a classroom one afternoon after I had just taught an hour of Torts. George looked at my writing on the whiteboard and told me not to erase it. Later, I learned he taught the next hour, using my notes on the board, and somehow connected them perfectly to his Constitutional Law lesson, which, on its face, seemed completely unrelated.
- I think of George handwriting article after article after article, longhand on a legal pad, only slowly getting used to the world of word processing.
- I remember an evening when George joined my two sons and me at Victory Field for a couple of innings of a baseball game. Before he left, my sons had new baseball gloves courtesy of Uncle George. I later received a baseball signed simply “Professor Wright.”

George knows so much about so many things. He can talk as easily to someone about the current state of the New York Yankees as he can talk to another person about the intricacies of music performed by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. He knows about art, popular culture, and social media.

He probably tinkered with AI before his students even knew what it was. George is also a master in the classroom, having taught Constitutional Law and Administrative Law to generations of lawyers. But if the school struggled to fill a hole in the schedule, George would step up and teach just about anything. He is the consummate team player.

That last point makes me reflect on what a joy it was to have someone like George on the faculty when my own career moved toward administration. For a dean, it is nice to have a colleague who can cover wide swaths of the curriculum, is willing to teach without complaint in any time slot (even on Friday nights), who gives unlimited time to students, all while publishing more than anyone in the academy. George also took on one of the most thankless tasks for the school by serving on the campus Promotion and Tenure committee. Unsurprisingly, soon after beginning his service, George became one of the group's most trusted members. He could thoughtfully review a dossier from a medical school professor as well as he could that of a philosopher. He earned the respect of everyone on the committee, year after year.

Actually, George has earned the respect of everyone with whom he has interacted throughout his remarkable career. And though I wish George the best as he heads into retirement, it will be a loss for future students and those who will not see him around Inlow Hall on a regular basis. That said, I imagine we will still hear from George, be it in writing, by email, or otherwise. I hope that will happen often—indeed, *prolifically* if at all possible. Godspeed, George. You are one of the best and I am grateful to count you as a friend and colleague for life.