

FURMAN
UNIVERSITY

13 February 1997

Professor Edwin Fogelman, Chair
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University of Minnesota
1414 Social Sciences Tower
267 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Dear Ed:

I am sorry that I could not be in attendance this evening at Charles Backstrom's retirement dinner, but I would like to send the following message to be read during the program. My attempts to juggle my schedule to be in Minneapolis-St. Paul tonight simply didn't work, but I am sure this will be a glorious event for Charles and his family.

I am hopeful that this correspondence finds Milda and you well.

Dear Charles:

I deeply regret that I could not be in attendance at this evening's retirement dinner. While the festivities honoring you are occurring in Coffman Union, I will be watching my mock trial team compete in the Regional Mock Trial Tournament being held at Duke University. Unfortunately, I could not find a way to both fulfill my duties as the mock trial coach and participate fully in your retirement dinner. I can, however, express my sentiments through this short note, and, therefore, be with Barbara, you, and your family in spirit.

Teachers touch their students in many ways, and you have touched me in innumerable ways. Given space limitations, I will share only the highlights. First, a first-rate teacher loves his or her subject. Your boundless enthusiasm for Minnesota politics, political parties, legislative politics, and local politics rubbed off on me. Not only did you want to read about these subjects, but you also showed me the importance of actually participating in these institutions and having students do likewise. Politics was not some dusty subject to you; it was alive and dynamic, and endlessly fascinating. I still remember interesting things that I learned in your classes—only you were capable of making the study of state constitutions fascinating! I was mesmerized by your lectures on the difficulty of amending the Minnesota constitution and the role the Brewers' Amendment played in making the amending process a difficult one. Your enthusiasm for government, especially Minnesota's issue-oriented politics, were clear to anyone who took your courses. You sent a strong message to students that participation in the political process was the responsibility of all citizens. And, in an age of growing cynicism, you provided a positive view of elected officials. Thank you for

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providing me with these lessons—I cherish them, and my only hope is that I can convey them to my students in a similar fashion.

Your love of practical politics and the many internship opportunities available in the Minnesota department have left an indelible mark on me. Without the knowledge of internships that you provided me with during the days as an undergraduate adviser, I would not have landed the Furman position. I probably have supervised over 250 interns during my nine years at Furman, and the state and local public affairs program that I established at Furman owes a great deal to your pioneering thinking about internships.

While your teaching and scholarship have touched me and many other students, I am even more taken by your humility, humor, generosity, and friendship. When my colleagues describe their graduate school experiences, none of them recalls anything very pleasant. I, on the other hand, have wonderful memories of dinner at the Backstrom house. Barbara and you were wonderful to Jeanine and me on numerous occasions. I always left those encounters at 70 Prospect Avenue enriched—not only because I was well fed, but because the conversation had been so stimulating. And, I still recall what fun I had working as your teaching assistant in Minnesota Politics during my first year. I wonder where SHARK is these days? You always made time for me to talk about what it would take to finish my dissertation, and you provided me with excellent information on the pitfalls to avoid and the paths to follow—too bad I did not always take your advice, Charles!

I'll leave you with one final observation about your career and what gifts you provided to me. Barbara and your children are an integral part of who you were and this sentiment was conveyed very clearly to your students. I find that extraordinarily refreshing in a time in which it seems our personal and professional lives are separate spheres.

So, despite the fact that I learned an enormous amount about politics from you, I learned even more about life. Your sense of fair play, decency, wit, devotion to family, and good humor are a model for me in my professional and personal life.

I wish you well, my dear friend, as you enter this next phase of your life. I cannot wait for my next visit to Minneapolis, so I can catch up on politics, hear about your latest book project, and listen to one of your spellbinding tales of Minnesota politics.

Thank you for all that you did for me.

Sincerely,



Glen A. Halva-Neubauer
Dana Associate Professor of Political Science
Director, Urban Studies Program