

EDWARD A. GOERNER

In Memoriam—1929–2012

Our friend and colleague Edward A. Goerner passed away on October 2, 2012. For over a half century, as student and later as faculty member, Edward committed himself to and worked tirelessly for the growth of intellectual life at the University of Notre Dame.

As a student at Notre Dame from 1948 to 1952, Edward first became attracted to the intellectual life and its relationship to Catholicism. His mentors included renowned teacher Frank O'Malley, who introduced Edward to contemporary Catholic thought in his famous course "Modern Catholic Writers."

After graduation, and four years in the Navy, Edward went to graduate school in political science at the University of Chicago. There he also encountered great teachers such as Leo Strauss and Jerome Kerwin and became committed to the study of political philosophy. He wrote his dissertation on church and state under the direction of Kerwin.

His first appointment was at Yale in 1959. But when he received a call to return to Notre Dame, he did so in 1960. For the next fifty-two years he was a key figure in Notre Dame's growth as a university and the growth of the Political Science Department in both its undergraduate and graduate dimensions, and a tireless advocate of liberal education.

Edward was an integral part of the development of the department. He helped guide the department's growth from eight members to forty-eight. He served long and wisely on the Committee on Appointments and Promotions and on search committees, and as Director of Graduate Studies. He was a mentor for young faculty, always ready to help them with research and teaching. He was a strong supporter of the *Review of Politics* and served for many decades as Associate Editor. On a college level, he founded and directed the Committee on Academic Progress, which provided top students with mentoring and steered them to the most challenging courses. He later founded and directed the small minor in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, which became the premier minor in the university.

One of the most revered teachers in Notre Dame history, in 1972 Edward was chosen winner of the Sheedy Award, the annual award for the most outstanding teacher in the College of Arts and Letters. His courses were intense, focused, and intellectually rich. He regularly taught a large undergraduate course in political theory in which he had students read Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Rousseau's *On the Social Contract*, and Plato's *Republic*, and challenged them to engage these three demanding texts in critical conversation. The course seamlessly integrated the readings with lectures in which Goerner brought

his formidable intellect to bear in interpreting the texts in light of perennial questions and current political realities. The course worked so well and on so many levels that his teaching assistants sometimes thought it was directed as much to their education as to that of the undergraduate students. He directed or was on the committees of scores of graduate students. He challenged them at every turn to articulate and defend their ideas and passed on his own combination of imaginative inquiry and exceptionally careful scholarship. At his death former students, from professors to deans and presidents of universities, to doctors and lawyers and members of the Federal Bench, all remembered him as a person who not only taught them, but also changed their lives.

Edward's intellectual focus kept alive the questions raised in his early work *Peter and Caesar*, a book regularly rediscovered by succeeding generations of scholars in the field. There he showed the contrast (but not necessarily the opposition) between Greek philosophy, "which directed the gaze of men to a divine order that wholly transcends the historical, impermanent world of birth, growth and decay," and the Christian experience, in which "revelation of the divine is through the Incarnation, the taking on of a human existence by God." Generations of students experienced working with Goerner as not only an intellectual exercise but also a challenge to choose a way of life that nourishes the mind and the soul. Throughout his career Edward challenged his students to live by that which is most divine in them and to love the Lord with their whole heart and soul.

Edward was devoted to Father Hesburgh's ideal of building a great Catholic university. During his whole career he encountered students whose families tended to see going to the university as career training, rather than as a search for Truth. He helped introduce them to the life of the mind as both a noble life and also as great "fun," a word he often used to describe what he was doing. He sent countless students on to graduate degrees at elite universities. In all of this he conducted himself with an inimitable fusion of intellectual seriousness, light-heartedness, and grace. In the classroom, in office hours, and often at his dinner table with his family, he nurtured students and convinced them that there were no limits to what they could aspire to, that they could be partners in the search for knowledge.

Edward was a central figure in the department, the college, and the university. He is too soon gone. He will be remembered, and he will be missed.

—John Roos
University of Notre Dame