

## Akhil Reed Amar<sup>†</sup>

Joe was true—that’s the best word, or at least one of the best, to describe him. Joe used words with care, and I want to do so here. So I looked up the word “true” in my dictionary, and found Joe smiling back at me on the page. Here is what I found:

TRUE . . .

Of persons: Steadfast in adherence to a commander or friend, to a principle or cause, to one’s promises, faith, etc.; firm in allegiance; faithful, loyal, constant, trusty. Somewhat arch . . . .

In more general sense: Honest, honourable, upright, virtuous, trustworthy; free from deceit, sincere, . . . unfeigned . . . .

Exact, accurate, precise; correct, right . . . .

Real, genuine . . . .

Joe was all these things; but of course a single word cannot do full justice to all that he was, and all that he means to us.

In law, the word “true” is part of a grand phrase describing the jury as “twelve good men, and true.” Joe was more than “true”; he was also a “good man.” He cared for his students with an intensity and a commitment that honestly put me to shame. He always had time—and a kind word—for a junior colleague. His eyes danced when he saw a child. He opened his house to us, and made us feel at home. We became family—and Joe loved family passionately. He made great popovers. He was wise, and witty, and young in spirit, even at the end. He faced challenges with courage and grace and humor.

He was also a truly great man in the law. He held Yale’s most prestigious chair, and wrote books that redefined his field and are read around the world. The law has yet to catch up with some of his best ideas; so his work still lives—it is still on the cutting edge. And beautifully written! He infused law with ideas from other disciplines in the best spirit of the school he loved so much, and that loved him back.

He was a truly generous man, a truly gracious man. Two days before his heart gave out, he came to see me. He was not in the best of health; it was not easy for him to make the trip; and so I had not expected him to come. We did not speak long, but his mere presence was a great gift to me. I shall remember

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that gift, and the many other gifts he gave me over more than a dozen years. I shall remember how his eyes twinkled when he saw my son.

It was an honor to be his friend. He was one of my heroes. God bless you, Joe.