The Executive Committee, 1984-85

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Abstract

Initials take their meaning from their context.
While carrying out his decanal functions, Ovid also maintained his roles as teacher and scholar. He taught courses at the Law Center and for the undergraduate program at Nova College. He wrote articles for our fledgling law review and assisted the editors of what was then the Nova Law Journal in securing major articles.

Ovid was and remains a critic of the quality of legal education being offered in the United States and urged the faculty to pursue innovations. For several years he compiled lengthy annual reports on the state of law school curricula and other emerging issues in legal education and distributed them to the other law schools' deans. He foresaw how technology was going to change the practice of law and eventually legal education. He took the initial steps to assure our students were trained in the new technologies, particularly in the area of computer assisted legal research.

These were all great accomplishments, but do not reflect Ovid's most important contributions—the spirit he brought to the Law Center and his commitment to giving every individual an opportunity to succeed. Ovid believed in doing whatever was needed in order to make the Law Center a better place—whether it was negotiating for additional faculty positions, restructuring the budget to avoid a tuition increase, moving furniture to the new faculty offices, or setting up the chairs at two o'clock in the morning in a just-completed classroom so it would be ready for the first class the next morning. It was his "can do" spirit that often inspired others to seek and achieve goals that initially seemed out of reach. Ovid thought each member of the Law Center community was an important part of its success. Little could be accomplished without the assistance of others. He was always interested in their work. He believed that combining all our work had a synergistic effect on the Law Center, university, and surrounding community.

Ovid never turned away students or a colleague who needed help with a problem or had a question. The caring attitude of his administration and the faculty is part of the history of what has made the Shepard Broad Law Center a special place. This spirit lives on at the Shepard Broad Law Center and is part of what make it and Nova University a very special place for the faculty, staff and students. Thank you for those remarkable years.

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Initials take their meaning from their context. Diplomats and economists hear "E.C." and think "European Community." Lawyers trained in the seventies remember, fondly or otherwise, "Ethical Considerations." But I am a Nova law professor. As such, I know the true meaning of "E.C." Those initials stand for "Executive Committee"—our 1984-85 decanal triumvirate.

In spring 1984 we looked forward to celebrating two anniversaries: Ovid Lewis's fifth year as dean, and the Law Center's tenth year of operation. Suddenly (or so it seemed at the time), Ovid deserted us to become the university's Vice President for Academic Affairs. With virtually no notice, we were deansless. Yes, the university really needed his guidance, for it faced such serious financial challenges that many of us felt that no affiliation was better than this one. But we had finally secured some stability at the Law Center and clearly weren't prepared for Ovid's departure.

Luckily for the Law Center, three senior colleagues—Bruce Rogow, Joe Smith, and Steve Wisotsky—agreed to tackle the many challenges of 1984-85. Rebuilding our relationship with the university, commencing a dean search, and reassuring students were but a small part of their task. When Ovid left, we were less than a year away from American Bar Association and Southern Association reaccreditation inspections. The fact that such inspections occurred on a regular cycle in no way reduced our anxiety level. Seven years of ABA provisional approval, and an endless stream of site teams, had ended in 1982. We were fully approved and wanted to stay that way.

Bruce, Joe, and Steve denominated themselves the Executive Committee, which quickly became the "E.C." Bruce took the title Acting Dean and ultimately moved into the dean's office. (Was there a hidden meaning behind his hesitance to move?) Joe was the internal administrator, responsible for faculty committees, faculty promotion and tenure, and related items. Steve became Minister of Finance—or "Min. Fin."—and mastered the budget.
E.C. meetings, which occurred as often as weekly, were an off-beat mixture of intensity and frivolity. I vividly recall one meeting that began with a playing of "My Attorney Bernie," a sharp contrast to the rest of that session.

Too many cooks may spoil the stew, but that was not the case with the E.C. and the law school. We got through the year, retained our accreditation, and remained collegial. The E.C. provided an outstanding example of teamwork in action, and we are fortunate that all three remain on our faculty.

Thank you Bruce, Joe, and Steve.

In admiralty, Professor Joe Smith teaches about navigating through dangerous waters and the importance of salvage. As Acting Dean, Joe Smith lived it.

Eight years ago, the good ship Nova was adrift, with three acting captains. Recognizing a need for one leader at the helm, Joe volunteered to steer us through the troubled waters. And the waters were turbulent, indeed. Due to university financial problems, the American Bar Association issued what amounted to a show cause order. One of Joe's first tasks was responding to this order—a prospect which would cause less brave souls to contemplate walking the plank.

In fact, Joe might have thought he had chosen a similar option himself. Because he has always valued candor, Joe wrote a response which placed the law school in a seemingly adversarial position against the university's president. Nevertheless, with faculty and student support, Joe was somehow able to honestly present the facts, soothe the university, and maintain ABA accreditation.

Initially beset by crisis, Joe put out the fires and made the ships run on time. I vividly recall the day the catalogue was to be sent to the printer. Unfortunately, when Joe went to get the materials, nothing had been done beyond collecting a few uncropped, and uninteresting, pictures. Joe worked through the night and, miraculously, produced a professional, impressive publication. But he did not do it alone. Credit must also be given to his lovely wife Alice and Amy, the first dog. Amy, clueless but loveable, added many valuable comments, probably on the catalogue, and certainly at faculty meetings and other official gatherings.

Joe faced confusion, the uncertainty of the position of acting dean, and transition in support personnel. And—though we all know how much he would have preferred to be on the slopes—when the university required the staff to work on Christmas and New Year's eves, Joe was at school, too. In fact, as dean, Joe always had time to speak with students, faculty, or staff.