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Joseph F. Smith, 1985-86

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Abstract

In admiralty, Professor Joe Smith teaches about navigating through dangerous waters and the importance of salvage.
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.
One personal story: Because Joe is a jogger, I bought him a pedometer for some occasion or another. It was not until the pedometer emerged from the Snoopy wrapping paper that I realized how worthless it was for Joe. Nevertheless, he said he loved it because this gift showed I never even think of him as blind. In fact, Joe’s lack of sight has never affected his vision. When Nova was in trouble, Joe saw what needed to be done and steered us on a steady course to safe harbor. Thank you, Joe.

When word went around that Roger was leaving to accept the deanship at Rutgers, Newark, I E-mailed my congratulations to him on the computer network that did not exist before he came to Nova. Something in this act caused me to think about how much had changed since Roger became a part of us and how much we have to thank him for.

I came to Nova in 1984, a time that may one day be remembered as "the good old days." But to me, as a new member of the faculty, some things didn’t seem very good at all. My faculty colleagues were very good, as they still are today. In fact, the faculty was the biggest plus for me about Nova. Many of the raw materials for positive growth existed, but forward motion seemed stymied. Morale was buffeted by financial uncertainties and a lack of an adequate physical plant, which drew intense and uncomfortable scrutiny from the American Bar Association. Relations with the university were deteriorating.

Roger Abrams acted as the catalyst for Nova’s growth and for the creation of its stability. He sought out the best in each of us and encouraged its development. While he got down to the business of overhauling the Law Center, he created the space in which we could excel. And he did it all with a smile that became famous.

Roger realized that to serve students well we needed an adequately staffed administrative structure. He built that structure, and from Career and Student Services to Development and Admissions, we can see the positive results. Roger also supported the acquisition of better technology. When I sit in my office conducting a Westlaw search on my computer, I don’t generally stop to thank Roger, so let me do so here.

Oh yes, my office: a clean, bright, sparkling workplace where my books do not mildew and my nose does not wrinkle at the smell. Lecture halls are tiered without sightline obstructions. The library is a three-floor invitation to productive work. The atrium, a sun-lit tree-filled area, has truly become the hub of the Law Center—a place where guest speakers and programs bring us together, just as Roger knew that it would. Buildings do not spring into existence because we wish to have them. Millions of dollars must be raised. This required an excellent development