

7-1-2009

The Dean

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Recommended Citation

R. N. Olsen, *The Dean*, 57 Buff. L. Rev. 1132 (2009).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/buffalolawreview/vol57/iss4/3>

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The Dean

R. NILS OLSEN†

We are gathered here today to celebrate the memory and extraordinary career of an equally extraordinary man, Jacob D. Hyman. In his fifty-four years of faculty service at the University, Jack more than any other person personified the very best qualities that we value and seek to instill at the University at Buffalo Law School. He was a good and decent man with a lifelong commitment to apply his legal skills, first imparted at Harvard Law School, to achieve the betterment and advancement of society. This commitment informed his teaching and scholarship throughout his long career. He was passionately committed to the necessity of real diversity within the membership of the bar and devoted a good deal of his time and effort to achieving it within the student body at the Law School.

Jack was a pioneer in studying the historical, political, and social context in which law is made and practiced. He had a very real respect and affection for his students and was a dedicated teacher who always sought to prepare and meaningfully participate in the learning process with them. Jack was never content to teach the same subject repeatedly, even at the close of his career. If I recall correctly, the last course that he taught was a course in New York Administrative Law, a subject that many of his colleagues questioned the existence of. Jack managed somehow to put this class into a context and to teach it very well when he was over ninety years old.

Jack was dedicated to the Law School and participated willingly and with vigor in our efforts to establish an effective development plan and program. Indeed, in many ways the efforts of those of us who followed him were informed by his values, contributions, and aspirations for the school. Equally importantly, Jack was loved and respected by his former students in a manner that the rest of his colleagues could only aspire to. Indeed, to many of our graduates from the late 1940s through the early 1960s, he was always thought of as simply "The Dean." They never

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tired of hearing about his continuing presence and activities within the Law School.

I will close my remarks with a brief example of what to me highlights his unique standing among our alumni. For many years I taught in the clinical education program at the Law School, including a very contentious period of time in environmental policy. Jack's office was just down the hall from mine and I began to meet with him regularly to discuss the work of the clinic and to seek his input on its work product. One particular matter involved a proposal to site a large solid waste landfill in a rural area. Many of the local residents were opposed to the proposal and the clinic was representing them in state court.

During the course of the litigation, I was scheduled to present oral argument on an appeal in the Fourth Department Appellate Division in Rochester. Jack very kindly read drafts of the appellate brief that my students and I had prepared and made numerous suggestions for its improvement. As the date of oral argument approached, I thought it would be appropriate and enjoyable to invite Jack to accompany us to Rochester. He and I drove down to the Appellate Division on a beautiful spring afternoon, and I suggested that he join me at the Appellant's counsel table.

After we arrived, we sat down at the table and the court of five justices filed in. Two were UB graduates of many, many years preceding my involvement in the school. Both delayed the proceedings by about ten minutes to acknowledge the presence of Dean Hyman and to engage in a fairly lengthy dialog with him concerning his involvement in the Law School, the courses he was teaching, and how his family was doing. Unfortunately, when oral argument finally began, my arguments were not held in the same esteem by the court. It was a difficult argument; it was a long argument; and it was particularly contentious argument. Counsel for the Appellee certainly had very little good to say about our case. Thus, I was quite surprised, although I guess I shouldn't have been, when he asked at the end of oral argument, "Could you please introduce me to Dean Hyman?"

Jack really had the ability to transcend even the differences among counsel in difficult cases. He was truly a person who was dedicated to the Law School. For many years he kindly read, commented on, and showed an interest in the numerous documents that were prepared for the Provost and President with respect to the Law School

and its program. I don't think we will ever see Jack's kind again. His fifty-four years of committed and very effective service to the Law School, as well as his dedication to the institution and what it aspired to be, were both truly unique and extremely important to those of us who try to soldier on in his absence.