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## Joseph F. Smith, 1985-86

Phyllis G. Coleman\*

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# Joseph F. Smith, 1985-86

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## **Abstract**

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## Joseph F. Smith, Jr., 1985-86

*Phyllis G. Coleman*

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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.



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*Nova Law Center Deans, 1974-93: A Tribute*

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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.