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TIM

*R. Lawrence Dessem**

THERE comes a time when every law school dean questions just why she or he has chosen to serve as dean. Deans experience both very high highs and very low lows. The dean often sees faculty, staff, and students at their best but just as often sees these same individuals at their worst. Regardless of the mix of highs to lows in any deanship, decanal service—if taken seriously—demands a tremendous commitment of time and energy. Thus the question is posed: Why devote such a significant portion of one's professional time to such service?

This question was posed for many of us quite starkly this past summer when Tim Heinsz, who served for many years as dean at the University of Missouri-Columbia Law School, died of a heart attack at age 56. By any measure, Tim had an outstanding tenure as dean. He served from 1987 until 2000, which made him one of the longer serving deans at the time of his return to the full-time faculty. His untimely passing raised for many of his fellow deans and good friends the question as to why Tim was such a great dean and why he had decided to devote more than a decade of his life to service as dean.

Upon his death, there was a great outpouring of grief and of remembrances concerning Tim.¹ Interestingly enough, the majority of these remembrances concerned Tim's service as a teacher rather than as dean. There is a special bond between a gifted professor and those students who are fortunate enough to experience that professor in his very first year of teaching, and that was certainly the case with Tim and his first classes of students. Well beyond these students, however, there were more stories and fond memories of Tim in the classroom than in the dean's office. Dean Kent Syverud has reminded us that "with the exception of a few dozen law professors, our ideas will improve the world more through our students than through our writing."² So it is that many deans will touch more people, in more profound ways, through their teaching than through their service as dean. This is why, in fact, many individuals continue to teach even while serving as dean.³

Tim, though, decided not only to teach but also to serve his law school as dean. His attitude is perhaps best summarized in the article that he wrote for the very first of these symposia on law school deaning: *Deaning Today: A Worthwhile*

* Dean and Professor of Law, University of Missouri-Columbia. My thanks to Professor William M. Richman, who suggested that this would be an appropriate article for the Leadership in Legal Education Symposium. Timothy J. Heinsz began his law teaching career at the University of Toledo College of Law, serving on the Toledo faculty from 1975 to 1981.

1. A small sampling of these remembrances will be published in the Fall 2004 edition of *Transcript*, the University of Missouri-Columbia Law School alumni magazine.

2. Kent Syverud, *Taking Students Seriously: A Guide for New Law Teachers*, 43 J. LEGAL EDUC. 247, 259 (1993).

3. See Jeff Brauch, *Why I Must Teach*, 34 U. TOL. L. REV. 23 (2002) (Leadership in Legal Education Symposium III); R. Lawrence Dessem, *Ten Things That Deans Can Do with Students*, 35 U. TOL. L. REV. 45, 46-48 (2003) (Leadership in Legal Education Symposium IV).

*Endeavor—If You Have the Time.*⁴ Tim's essay was written in the final year of his deanship, and it evidences a mature appreciation of the joys, satisfactions, and demands of law school deaning. Indeed, Tim initially thanked the editors of the *Leadership in Legal Education Symposium* for giving him the opportunity to reflect upon law school deaning: "Because of the many, varied demands on the time of a law [school] dean, one has too little time to reflect upon the deeper issues of values, goals (accomplished, failed, or in progress), and leadership."⁵

Tim realized, and his deanship evidenced, the derivative nature of so many of a successful dean's accomplishments and satisfactions: "A dean benefits the overall institution most by enabling faculty to accomplish the law school's mission of teaching, research and service."⁶ Nevertheless, Tim's article also remarked upon the unique role of the law school dean in "institution building" and correctly noted that such institution building only could be accomplished by "commitment and a length of time of continuous leadership."⁷ Tim, himself, made that commitment to his law school and rendered that continuous service. At the time of his death, Tim had recruited and hired well more than half of the faculty of the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law.

Law school deans also have unique opportunities to help others. Deans are often called upon to counsel students concerning law school or career issues, support alumni seeking judicial or other public office, and "cut through the red tape" to achieve a rough justice concerning various administrative puzzles. A simple hallway hello from the dean to a new student or staff member may lift the spirits of that individual in a way that the dean may never appreciate. After his death, a lawyer told of the way in which Tim Heinsz had helped him in a special way at a significant time in that individual's life:

At 5:00 a.m. during finals week, our first son was born. I had a final that morning at 8:00 a.m. I contacted the professor about rescheduling the final. [The professor] said no. I contacted Dean Heinsz. Later that morning, he called me and said congratulations first. He then said that I did not need to worry about the final exam. He would let me take it in a couple of days by coming to his office. In the next couple of days I contacted Dean Heinsz and made an appointment to go to his office to take the exam. Again, when I got to his office, he said congratulations on the birth of our first child. He gave me the exam and let me take it in the conference room outside his office. I have never forgotten his kindness and concern during that time.⁸

While service as dean carries with it some unique burdens, it also provides the dean with some unique ways in which to help others—as Tim well knew.

Another alumni story illustrates the unique opportunities provided to a dean to inspire.

4. Timothy J. Heinsz, *Deaning Today: A Worthwhile Endeavor—If You Have the Time*, 31 U. Tol. L. Rev. 615 (2000) (Leadership in Legal Education Symposium).

5. *Id.* at 615.

6. *Id.* at 618.

7. *Id.*

8. University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law, *Transcript*, Fall 2004, at 29, 30 (story from attorney Thomas D. Rodenberg).

In April 1993, our firm started.... Our original location was ... in the basement of a very old building. We had no windows. Our office walls were the original stone foundation of the building. It was damp. We were excited, eager and wide-eyed to start a law practice.

I believe that it was in the summer of that first year that I received a phone call from Dean Heinsz. He wanted to stop by, visit and congratulate us on our new venture. So he came to Jefferson City during the course of the business day and visited with us for approximately an hour.... It was not a solicitation call for funds for the law school, but of encouragement and celebration. The visit as I remember fondly was like a family meeting where we shared stories and many laughs. My partners and I were on "cloud nine" immediately after he left.... I will never forget that visit.⁹

Tim not only had this ability to inspire others, but he took the time to use the unique opportunities presented to a dean to do so.

In his symposium essay, Tim both celebrated the joys and satisfactions of deaning and acknowledged the unique demands of the modern deanship. In the title of his symposium article, he considered deaning "A Worthwhile Endeavor—If You Have the Time." Thus Tim recommended decanal sabbaticals such as those from which he had benefited during his lengthy deanship. He also acknowledged that these sabbaticals had been made possible, and were successful, because he had in Ken Dean such a talented and experienced associate dean.¹⁰ Tim also acknowledged the "generous support" of his family, which had made possible his unique and outstanding service as dean.¹¹

What then made Tim Heinsz a great dean? Tim was not a great dean because he had mastered the many techniques and duties and routines that are essential to any successful deanship. Tim knew deaning well, and he had an excellent sense of just how the various parts and people within a law school related to each other. While such understandings are essential to any successful deanship, they do not make one a truly great dean.

Tim was a great dean for the same reason that he was a great teacher, and father, and husband, and friend. As Thomas Sullivan, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost of the University of Minnesota and Tim's long-time friend, noted at the service prior to Tim's funeral, it was Tim's character that made him great. Tim's reliability, and conscientiousness, and generosity, and sense of humor, and integrity would have made him great in any profession that he might have chosen. His unique character made him a particularly gifted dean—not because of what he did (although he did many wonderful and significant things) but because of who he was.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us, there is huge difference between "making a living" and "making a life."¹² Tim's life and deanship remind us that there is a similar difference between the techniques and strategies that constitute

9. *Id.* at 29 (story from attorney Steven G. Newman).

10. Heinz, *supra* note 4, at 619.

11. *Id.* at 617.

12. Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: A Life of Martin Luther King* 28 (1982).

“good deaning” (of which these symposia are such a wonderful repository) and the bedrock characteristics that make one a truly “good dean.”

Tim’s life was not bounded, and cannot be captured, by the lines on his resume. While his resume may capture much of what Tim did, no such listing of accomplishments and achievements can adequately describe just who Tim was. He was many things, and he did many things. I’m particularly proud that he set such a standard for us all by his service as law school dean.

Thank you, Tim.