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# A Hale and Hearty Thank You to Harvey Wingo

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# A HALE AND HEARTY THANK YOU TO HARVEY WINGO

*C. Paul Rogers III\**

VENERABLE institutions such as law schools outlast all of us mortals who spend our professional lives teaching. But that is not to say that the retirement of a gifted, dedicated faculty member such as Harvey Wingo does not create an institutional hole that is almost impossible to fill. Yes, the SMU law school will carry on without Harvey but it will miss him in many ways.

We will certainly miss his stability. After all, since his stint in the JAG, teaching law at SMU is the only job Harvey has ever had. Of more consequence, however, we will miss a genuinely kind, conscientious friend who was an outstanding teacher and mentor to SMU law students for over 30 years. He has a splendid way of making those around him feel better; an encounter with Harvey is always a bright spot in the day. His hale and hearty handshake and ready smile indicates that he really is glad to see you.

Harvey Wingo was my colleague for over 20 years and during that time we worked closely together many times. Always he had an almost fanatical desire to do the right thing, after duly weighing the options. It was then that his conscientious nature took over. It is not that Harvey was averse to making a decision, he just wanted all the relevant information at his disposal before doing so. Once during the 1980's Harvey was named acting dean for the summer. The former dean, Jes Salacuse, had moved on to the Fletcher School at Tufts. I was stepping down as associate dean for academic affairs and was spending the summer directing our summer program in Oxford and the new dean was not to arrive until fall. The administrative cupboard was bare, so to speak, leaving Harvey to fend for himself. He literally burned up the transatlantic phone lines to the UK, asking questions and obtaining necessary information so that he could make informed decisions.

It was during this period that he also displayed a keen, self-deprecating sense of humor. At the end of the summer he hosted a ceremony to unveil outgoing Dean Salacuse's portrait, as is our custom. Jes and family and our colleagues were assembled and Jes's sizeable, commissioned portrait was hanging in the foyer, covered with cloth, waiting for its unveiling. Harvey announced that first he had another unveiling to

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perform, and pointed to a white tissue covering a very small easel. With some dramatic effect he announced that, since he had served as acting dean for three months, he thought that he, too, was entitled to a portrait, and so with a flourish he ripped off the tissue to reveal a Polaroid snapshot of himself.

This was not to be the only time that Harvey served as acting dean and he was persuaded to serve as associate dean for academic affairs twice as well. Surely that must be a record for administrative service at a single law school. Are there any more thankless jobs in legal academe than acting dean or associate dean? Harvey may have been a four-time loser but SMU was a four-time winner!

So to say that Harvey was a model law school citizen is to understate his case. I had the pleasure to serve as dean for nine years during Harvey's tenure and I frequently asked him to undertake difficult tasks or chair burdensome committees. Choosing Harvey was easy because if he said he would do something, you could count on him doing it and doing it well.

When I announced that I was stepping down as dean, the school went through an unsuccessful dean search and was faced with the prospect of an interim dean. The faculty's unanimous choice was Harvey. He had the respect of all his colleagues, almost 40 people reflecting the diversity of a modern law faculty and the different perspectives that they bring to the table. It goes to show that diversity does not mean any loss in essential values and perhaps only strengthens core beliefs in character and integrity, qualities in which Harvey abounds.

Indeed, Harvey proved to be the perfect choice. He loved being a law professor, liked and respected his faculty colleagues and enjoyed working with them. In my probably too long tenure as dean, I had, as is often the case with deans, grown more removed from the faculty and their concerns, preoccupied as I was with fund-raising, alumni relations, annual budget tussels, bar relations, rankings, student recruitment, admissions and the like. Harvey, on the other hand, reveled in identifying and working with the faculty and would agree to take the job only if I would continue to help with some of the external duties so that he could spend his principal energies within the school. He was a wonderful bridge to a new administration and selflessly agreed to delay his retirement to again serve the school.

In the classroom Harvey was a marvel and held the prestigious Vinson & Elkins Faculty Fellowship for Teaching Excellence. He was treasured by his students, who sometimes lampooned him as coming off like a good-humored Baptist preacher. Although he taught the often contentious criminal law curriculum, the school honored him as the first two-time winner of our Don M. Smart Award, which honors the law school's teacher of the year.

Fortunately perhaps, future SMU law students will not know what they are missing after Harvey's retirement. His colleagues, however, certainly

do know and will miss his daily presence, his good nature and his sense of right and wrong. For while it is true that institutions outlast us all, educational institutions are essentially made up of the people who toil there, who teach, learn and support. Harvey Wingo has for more than 30 years made SMU a far better place. He has left his mark on this institution and everyone within our community has benefitted significantly. For that I am most grateful and thank him profusely. I only hope that in his well-earned retirement with Carolyn that he sometimes comes by the law school to brighten our day with that hearty handshake and ready smile.

