

Uldaho Law

## Digital Commons @ Uldaho Law

---

Articles

Faculty Works

---

2002

### Remarks Upon the Retirement of Dean Emeritus and Professor Sheldon A. Vincenti

John A. Miller

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.law.uidaho.edu/faculty\\_scholarship](https://digitalcommons.law.uidaho.edu/faculty_scholarship)



Part of the [Legal Biography Commons](#), and the [Legal Education Commons](#)

---

# REMARKS UPON THE RETIREMENT OF DEAN EMERITUS AND PROFESSOR SHELDON A. VINCENTI

JOHN A. MILLER, DEAN

There are many laudatory things one might say about Sheldon Vincenti. He is wise. He is principled. He is honest. He is good-humored. He is diplomatic. He is kind. He is a leader who possesses astute vision. Because of these traits Sheldon was an excellent dean. I have come to appreciate him even more since he stepped down from that post seven years ago. For me he has been a wise and disinterested counselor whose advice I could seek when there was no one else to turn to. His judgment and his high-mindedness have been invaluable to me, as I have sought to find my way through the thicket of university and state politics.

Sheldon is not without his peculiarities. One of those is that he detests having his picture taken. As a consequence he usually grimaces when a camera is pointed in his direction. It is almost impossible to find a picture of him among our class photos with a smile on his face. This stands in stark contrast to the quick smile and genial manner one sees from him in every day life.

As a dean Sheldon was an excellent mentor to junior faculty. His door was always open to us. I recall spending many afternoons during my first years at Idaho sitting in his office getting his advice about my latest scholarly effort. Sheldon's main area of expertise is jurisprudence. My own field is taxation. These two areas could hardly seem further apart, but Sheldon was able to show me how to look at the law of taxation through the lens of legal philosophy. I feel that some of my best work is directly traceable to my conversations with Sheldon.

As dean Sheldon was also a consummate host. Over the years he opened his home to countless numbers of students, faculty and visiting dignitaries. At his sprawling perch on Moscow Mountain, we often gathered to celebrate the life of the law school. Those events contributed to a special sense of collegiality that is unmatched by any other law school with which I am familiar.

Sheldon was also a remarkably astute financial manager. He and his assistant, Pat Trevino, took a meager budget and stretched it to cover all the multitudinous needs of the college. If there was a conference someone wished to attend or a piece of equipment that needed replacing, Sheldon and Pat would find the money. I cannot recall that he ever refused to fund a reasonable request. Part of Sheldon's success in this area was due to his extraordinary memory. He knew where every penny was lodged in every one of the law school's dozens of accounts. But mainly it rested on good planning. Like a good poker player he knew when to hold, when to fold, and when to raise the stakes. Through his sound planning the law school always managed

to have recent vintage computers on everyone's desk. We also had adequate travel funds, research support, and a well cared for building. It is through Sheldon's efforts that we established our college professional fee fund. This fund now comprises about ten percent of our budget and has proven crucial to the success of our enterprise.

Sheldon is an outstanding teacher. In recent years he has taught many different courses in our curriculum, some for the first time. At a time in his career when many senior faculty might have felt entitled to slow down, Sheldon was willing, even eager, to try something new. In his first year after leaving the deanship he taught half time in our clinic. He has taught Conflicts of Law, Jurisprudence, Civil Procedure, and Criminal Procedure. In their evaluations of his courses our students express great respect for Sheldon as a teacher.

From all that I have said, I hope that it is clear that Sheldon possesses a powerful intellect. He lent that intellect to every activity no matter how trivial. He brought it to bear when he was advising a junior colleague, balancing a tricky budget, planning a technology advance in the building, or teaching our students the law. Part of the power of his intellect is the way in which he effectively unites his intelligence with an understanding and empathic nature. He listens carefully to the ideas and feelings of others and responds thoughtfully and with gentleness. His essential compassion is always evident in his dealings with others. In fifteen years I have never heard him utter a cutting or cruel remark. Even in the face of great provocation he is always the model colleague. In situations where conflict might have ruled the day, Sheldon always sought common ground. In the modern parlance, he looked for the win-win solution. More often than not he found it.

In the end the thing I have come most to value in Sheldon is his friendship. Through all the years and all kinds of trials his friendship has been a constant. I consider it a great honor to call him my friend and colleague.

John A. Miller  
Dean  
University of Idaho  
College of Law  
Moscow, Idaho