

THE DEANSHIP OF ROBERT H. MUNDHEIM

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When Robert H. Mundheim became Dean of the Law School in 1982, the school that he undertook to lead was in a very precarious situation. Seven years later, the Law School was out of danger and stronger than ever. It is more than fitting to recognize Bob Mundheim's extraordinary accomplishments.

Dean Mundheim began his term in the middle of the spring semester. For a number of reasons, the deanship itself had been unstable for over a decade. A series of wonderful people had served, each for only a short time. The physical plant was rapidly approaching need for a major development. The twenty-five year horizon of the last round of capital improvements had been reached and the needs for more and better space were pressing. The School's operating income was markedly insufficient to permit payment of adequate levels of compensation, purchase of library materials, and support for numerous vital programs. While the extraordinary quality of the student body seemed assured, high and rising costs were unduly affecting students' educational and career choices. Of greatest concern, however, was the imminent loss of the last of the great faculty, recruited by Earl Harrison at the end of World War II, and the intellectual backbone of the School for forty years. Clearly, the new Dean was not going to preside over an institution in substantial equilibrium.

Seven years later, when Dean Mundheim chose not to continue for a second term, the Law School has a strong, relatively young faculty, a student body of the largest size and highest credentials ever, a greatly strengthened library, a substantially enhanced educational program in both curricular and non-curricular offerings, a reasonably solid financial base, an exciting capital improvement plan poised for implementation, and a general sense that this Law School will go into the next century at the top of its powers. All of us who have a stake in this Law School owe to Bob Mundheim full credit for leading the School through that difficult transition period to its present position of robust vitality and optimism.

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From my perspective as a faculty member, the outstanding accomplishment of Dean Mundheim was meeting the challenge of building a new faculty. In 1982, anyone could foresee the imminent retirements of George L. Haskins, John O. Honnold, Noyes E. Leech, A. Leo Levin, Louis B. Schwartz, Ralph Spritzer, Clyde Summers, and Biddle Law Librarian Richard Sloane. All would achieve emeritus status on or before 1989.¹

While a new faculty was an urgent priority, the incoming Dean had around him only a few senior faculty who could be expected to continue beyond his term. Among the present "standing faculty" of the Law School, other than the Dean himself, only three of us were tenured when he took office. Frank Goodman, Bob Gorman, and I are the small cadre of tenured faculty with roots back before 1982 who remain in a tenured faculty that was otherwise completely rebuilt.

Three-fourths of the tenured faculty members today were promoted to tenure or appointed with tenure during the Mundheim years.² Changes of this magnitude do not occur without some turbulence. Some short-sighted critics, looking at the comings and goings, thought they saw the Law School in steep decline. It is truly remarkable that, despite the critics and nay-sayers, the Dean never faltered and the Law School came through this hazardous period without ever losing stride.

The Mundheim years also saw the recruitment of a truly remarkable group of young law teachers and scholars, rapidly maturing in their academic careers, whose futures stretch even farther into the coming century. These talented and promising faculty members, bearing appointment letters signed by Bob Mundheim, will contribute immeasurably to the Law School's reputation in the years ahead.

The Law School's administrative leadership was also substantially reconstituted by Dean Mundheim. Most of the key posts had to

¹ In addition to the foreseeable losses by retirement from the 1982 tenured faculty, inevitably there were others. Ed Sparer died. Six tenured faculty members, often for compelling personal reasons, accepted opportunities at other law schools. Howard Lesnick resigned to help establish the new law school of the City University of New York at Queens. Paul Bender accepted the law deanship at Arizona State University. Alex Capron left teaching briefly, then reentered academe in California. Henry Hansmann followed Pennsylvania economist Oliver Williamson to Yale. Steve Schulhofer went to Chicago and Alan Watson to Georgia. Two of the senior faculty, Martin Aronstein and Jan Krasnowiecki, returned to private practice.

² Three untenured members of the faculty in 1982 were promoted to tenure status during the Mundheim years: Regina Austin, Stephen B. Burbank, and Ralph Smith.

be filled. Michael Wachter became Director of the revitalized Institute for Law and Economics. The Law School established the Center on Professionalism with the Hon. Edmund B. Spaeth as its Director. Elizabeth Slusser Kelly took over the Biddle Law Library. Directorship of the Law Alumni and Development Office went to Donald G. Myers. Ernie Gonsalves became Business Manager. Gary Clinton was promoted to Registrar and Frances Spurgeon to Assistant Dean for Admissions and Financial Aid. The Law School's important special events became the special concern of Connie Kessler. The Law School has never had a better administrative team.

In many ways the most permanent and yet ephemeral component of the Law School is its student body. Hundreds of students enter and graduate each year. Throughout the Mundheim years, each new class had improved credentials. In August, 1989, the last class admitted during Dean Mundheim's term arrived in unprecedented numbers and with the highest-ever qualifications. An enormous increase occurred in the percentage of admitted students who preferred Pennsylvania over other first-rank law schools.

Dean Mundheim also pursued vigorously his agenda for enhancement of the educational mission of the Law School. Despite drastic turnover in the faculty between 1982 and 1989, the curriculum suffered no setbacks. An innovative course to teach professional responsibility became part of the first-year curriculum. The Journals of International Business Law and Labor Law were established. The Institute of Law and Economics and the new Center on Professionalism flourished. Educational activities outside the classroom, speakers, colloquia, increased dramatically. Through a variety of programs, Dean Mundheim arranged to have law students brought into personal contact with a host of successful lawyers across the spectrum of the profession. An endowed chair in Talmudic Studies and the Law School's second endowed lecture series were inaugurated. Dean Mundheim's last agenda item for educational reform, approved by the faculty for implementation in the coming year, requires every upper class law student to devote a minimum of thirty-five hours a year to some professional service in the public interest.

Students at the Law School during the Mundheim years received an excellent education. Over 2,000 alumni carry diplomas signed by Dean Mundheim, including 1,785 with J.D. degrees, 330 with LL.M degrees, and five with the degree of S.J.D. The professional careers of these alumni will extend into the second half of the Twenty-first century.

From his first days in office, Dean Mundheim vigorously addressed the serious financial and physical concerns of the Law School. Compensation levels had been slipping in comparison with other law schools. The collection of the Biddle Law Library was not growing fast enough to keep up with the needs of faculty, students, and others. More classrooms were essential, and the Library was rapidly running out of space.

During the Mundheim years, the Law School's operating budget doubled in size, reflecting gains in compensation levels, improved academic programs, increases in student financial aid, and acceleration in library acquisitions. While some of these gains were made possible by increased tuition receipts, a great deal resulted from the Dean's remarkably successful fundraising strategies. Alumni and friends were persuaded to triple their financial support in annual giving. Capital gifts likewise soared. New faculty chairs were funded, and numerous special funds were received. Much of the wherewithal for the Law School's needed new building, to house the library and classrooms, is in hand.

The Mundheim leadership style, typically low-keyed and self-effacing, often seemed out of place during this period of astonishing change and growth. Not a naturally gifted speaker, Bob Mundheim did not try to lead or persuade with inspirational rhetoric or *bonhomie*. He succeeded by having the clear vision and confident judgment to set challenging but achievable goals for himself and others and by having the helmsman's uncanny capacity to stay on the course set.³ Only occasionally were the pains and stresses of the task even faintly visible. Never did Bob Mundheim seek personal credit or praise for the accomplishments.

At the last meeting of the faculty with Dean Mundheim presiding, the following resolution was adopted:

RESOLUTION

Seven and a half years ago, the Faculty invited Robert H. Mundheim to be its Dean. Happily, you accepted. As your term ends, we reflect briefly on the enduring changes that have occurred.

The library — recovering rapidly from a period of neglect. Over 1,500 exceptional students added to the ranks of our alumni. New educational programs, centers, journals and other initiatives.

³ He plays tennis the same way.

Library administrative cadre of the highest quality and morale. A resource base substantially strengthened.

And finally — a faculty successfully reconstituted; most of us were not here when your term commenced.

You have led the School with admirable vision, an informed sense of the School's needs, and extraordinary devotion to the endless demands of the task. In the future history of the School, the Mundheim years will stand out as a period of remarkable revitalization. The substance and spirit of the School are much stronger now than when you took office.

As you now rejoin us as Professor Mundheim, the Faculty expresses to you its sincere sense of appreciation and gratitude for all your manifold contributions.

