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## A TRIBUTE TO VICE DEAN JERRY WILEY

The following tributes commemorate the February 1997 passing of Jerry Wiley, the University of Southern California Law School's Vice Dean. These individual writings represent the various ways in which Jerry Wiley touched the lives of many people. Gathered from USC law students, alumni, faculty, deans, and practicing professionals in the legal community, these tributes evidence the unforgettable character of Vice Dean Jerry Wiley.



DEAN SCOTT H. BICE

Jerry Wiley and I first met as law students at USC in the fall of 1966. I was a second year student and he was in his third year. We worked together on the *Law Review*, but I did not know him well. Two years later, I joined the USC law faculty and by that time Jerry had already become an important resource for the Law School. Now, he did not plan, as a third year student, to make his career at USC. He had accepted a job at Santa Barbara's leading law firm and planned to be a practicing lawyer in that most pleasant setting. But just as he was about to graduate, a senior professor was taken ill and an associate dean went on leave. My predecessor, Dorothy Nelson, always a wise judge of talent, asked Jerry to delay his departure to Santa Barbara for six months to fill in temporarily as an instructor and administrator. Dorothy is a persuasive person, and Jerry accepted her offer. Jerry quickly proved to be so good at both teaching and administration that Dorothy again used her persuasive powers to convince him to turn his temporary assignments into permanent ones. And thus began a thirty year career of absolutely superb service to the University of Southern California and its law school.

When Dorothy left the Law School to become judge of the United States Court of Appeals in 1980, I succeeded her. My very first act was to reject Jerry's offer to resign as associate dean—he firmly believed that all associate deans should resign when a new dean is appointed, so that the new dean can assemble his or her own team. Rejecting his resignation and convincing him to stay on as vice dean was as good a decision as I have made as dean. For the next seventeen years, Jerry and I worked together in a relationship so close, so candid, so rewarding, and so fruitful that words are simply inadequate to express what he meant to me and what he did for the many constituencies that he served.

Jerry Wiley was truly unique in American legal education. I almost never use the word unique, but in this case it is fully justified, for Jerry assumed more roles, had broader responsibilities, and touched more constituencies than anyone else at our law school—or at any other American law school of which I am aware.

He was an administrator who at one time or another was directly responsible for every facet of the Law School with the exception of the li-

brary. He directed admissions; he served as dean of students; he had primary responsibility for our fundraising activities; he was in charge of alumni relations. Jerry created and then directed our extensive program of continuing education; he recruited and oversaw part-time adjunct faculty; he supervised construction of two major building projects, first, the "new" Law School in the seventies and, second, the major addition in the eighties; he launched our computerization efforts and directed the computing staff; he advised the student law journals; and Jerry served with the greatest skill as the Law School's chief financial officer.

But he was far more than an able and accomplished administrator; Jerry was also a passionate teacher and a significant scholar. Even though his administrative duties limited the time he had to devote to teaching and scholarship, he still taught a regular first year class in torts and was one of our most respected instructors. Jerry believed in rigorous preparation, and he demanded it of himself as well as of his students. It was standard practice for Jerry to arrive at the Law School well before sun-up on the days that he taught to prepare his class. And, oh, was he an effective teacher, instilling the highest values of professionalism and ethical conduct in his students as he guided them through the doctrine of torts and taught them the process of legal reasoning.

And, again, although his administrative duties precluded him from writing as much as he would have liked, he did produce highly regarded scholarly articles in the field of torts. For example, his article tracing the impact of appellate court decisions on the medical profession is a classic, and continues to be reprinted in the standard instructional materials used to teach Torts in the nation's law schools.<sup>1</sup>

Jerry was also deeply involved in university service, chairing a number of important task forces and committees. Outside of USC, he was involved in Bar Association activities and in the other central focus of his life, his church. In all these activities he excelled.

All this is important, but when you have worked closely with someone in a confidential relationship for many years, these accomplishments are not as important as the character of the person. I will always remember and cherish four aspects of Jerry that, for me, defined him and help to explain why he was so admirable.

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1. See Jerry Wiley, *The Impact of Judicial Decisions on Professional Conduct: An Empirical Study*, 55 S. CAL. L. REV. 345 (1982).

First, Jerry was a true mentor. I think this was partly connected to his philosophy of education but it was also rooted in his religious faith. Jerry truly wanted to help everyone—students, faculty, staff, graduates, and friends—to be all that they could be. Our colleague, Ron Garet, has written the following: “Jerry was like an older brother; he would give me a pat on the back if he thought I deserved it, and he would also tell me I was screwing up if he thought I deserved it . . . I can assure you that what he said at such times was well meant and on the mark.”

Jerry was there when someone needed a shoulder to cry on or asked for some advice about solving a personal or financial problem. He reveled in seeing young staff and faculty blossom into successful professionals and teacher-scholars. And he followed with great pride and enjoyment the successes of his current and former students as they progressed in their careers. Of course, Jerry’s mentoring began at home with his children, John and Julie. He was most certainly a mentor to them, and he basked in John’s success as a highly respected photographer and in Julie’s triumphs in her business career. Jerry Wiley loved being a mentor, and he was a mentor of the first class.

Second, Jerry was an enabler. He loved solving problems and finding ways to say “yes” to worthwhile requests. How many faculty over the years figured out a way to purchase their first house because of Jerry’s wise advice? How many times did he come up with a creative solution to a space problem or a class scheduling conflict or a student’s emotional or financial distress? How many faculty, students, and staff were guided to the right lawyer through Jerry’s good offices and extensive contacts in the legal community? Too many to count.

Now note, however, that I said Jerry loved finding ways to say “yes” to *worthwhile* requests. I used that modifier, “worthwhile,” because Jerry was, third, also a husbandler of resources. Partly because he had responsibility for balancing the budget each year, but probably more because Jerry had a very strong aversion to what, in polite company, can be called “boondoggles,” Jerry was a careful steward of the resources entrusted to his care. The Law School never ran a deficit on his watch. I think that we never wasted money, except, perhaps, in a few instances when I authorized an expenditure that he had recommended against.

Finally, Jerry was a navigator. Oh, how he loved to negotiate on behalf of the Law School. I am not sure just why he enjoyed it so much, but the desire was clearly strong and the joy of a successful negotiation was something to behold. It usually resulted in mutually exchanged “high-fives” and that familiar and expressive Texas “whoop” from Jerry.

The annual budget was of course, a primary focus of his negotiating talents. Jerry inevitably found a way to produce a balanced budget, ensuring that we always had adequate resources for our programs.

Over the years we worked together, we shared many confidences, we talked candidly about the school and our lives in it, about our progress and our problems, both institutional and personal. And we talked about our opportunities. Throughout his career, Jerry had numerous opportunities to be considered for the deanship of other law schools. He was a natural candidate and made many search lists. But Jerry always said, "No, thanks." USC was his school: he was invested, he was loyal, he was committed. He said to me, "I would rather be vice dean here and share in what this school is and what it is becoming than go off somewhere else simply so I can run my own shop."

He was immensely proud of the progress of the USC Law School during the past thirty-five years. Proud, not just because the school achieved status in national magazine rankings, but because the faculty grew in size and recognition, the facilities improved dramatically, and the academic program and faculty research contribute to the quality of justice in our society. I think he understood to some degree—not enough, I regret—the central role that he played in that progress.

Jerry loved his teaching, his mentoring, his negotiating. He adored his children and cherished his friends. He was deeply devoted to his religion and lived a life of which his church is so rightfully proud.

No institutions on earth are more enduring than great churches and great universities. His church and the University of Southern California Law School will be here long after all of us have joined Jerry. Jerry Wiley is a part of the history of those two institutions, a history that will record him as a highly important, positive force who helped both institutions carry out their noble missions. We were all enriched by knowing Jerry Wiley; we are all lessened by his premature passing.