

Maurer School of Law: Indiana University
Digital Repository @ Maurer Law

Sheldon Plager (1977-1984)

Law School Deans

Fall 1984

Dean's Message

Sheldon J. Plager
Indiana University School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: <https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/plager>



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

Recommended Citation

Plager, Sheldon J., "Dean's Message" (1984). *Sheldon Plager (1977-1984)*. 40.
<https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/plager/40>

This Writing by Dean Sheldon Plager is brought to you for free and open access by the Law School Deans at Digital Repository @ Maurer Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sheldon Plager (1977-1984) by an authorized administrator of Digital Repository @ Maurer Law. For more information, please contact rvaughan@indiana.edu.



JEROME HALL LAW LIBRARY

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Maurer School of Law
Bloomington

Dean's message



Over these past seven years I have used the Dean's Message to discuss a number of topics. Most often the subject has been something closely related to the law school, its activities and its operations.

Occasionally I have written about matters of more general concern to the profession, such as the report by President Bok of Harvard on the flaws in our legal system. Elsewhere in this *Bill of Particulars* I have discussed at some length matters about the School—a sort of final accounting of my stewardship as dean. I want to use the balance of this Dean's Message for a more personal message.

Following the public announcement this past spring of my intention to step down as dean in the fall of 1984, I received a number of letters, calls, and some personal visits reflecting disappointment with my decision, and concern that the momentum the School has may be dissipated as a result. Without claiming undue credit or displaying false modesty, it is true that in the past few years a number of problems with which the School has struggled—some of long standing, some more recent—have been resolved, and real progress has been made in a number of areas of vital importance to the School's future. I am pleased that I had a part in it; I am appreciative of the recognition I am given for my work as dean.

I understand and am sympathetic with the concern for continuity. Years ago the tradition in law schools was for deans to serve 15, 20, 25 years in office; usually only retirement or death ended their service. Our own Dean Bernard Gavit and, more recently, Leon Wallace are cases in point. For the past two decades the opposite has been true. Now, for whatever combination of reasons, in any given year there are a third to a fourth of the nation's law schools searching for a dean; the statistical average for decanal

tenure is about three years. While there are a few "old" deans still to be found, there are also a striking number of cases of deans who last less than a year or two.

When I accepted the deanship at Indiana I considered a five-year term a good goal for which to strive. As I approached my fifth year in office, I found myself immersed, in addition to all the other activities of the School, in two major projects for which I felt a special responsibility. One was the impending American Bar Association reaccreditation inspection, which occurs every seven years. Because the 1975 inspection had been critical in some important areas, it was essential that the School's visible progress not be obscured by the appearance of instability. The other was related: the long and arduous effort to plan and fund the building addition and renovation, one of the ABA's major concerns, was in its final stages.

*With a new dean in place,
I have every confidence
that we will pick up where
we left off and that our
momentum will continue
unabated.*

The School has now been reinspected; the relevant reviewing committees have considered the report; with the filing of our follow-up reports we will be fully reaccredited. The second project—the building—received its critical push this past winter when the legislature funded the second phase. Construction on this phase has begun. It is now only a matter of monitoring and inspection.

As I entered my seventh year it was clear to me that the time had come for me to think about what I wanted to do beyond deaning, as well as ways

the School might benefit from new ideas and new leadership. With the successful conclusion of these two projects, I felt comfortable about stepping down. True, there will be something of a hiatus while we search for a new dean. This is not necessarily bad, since it will give us a period for reflection and consolidation. The coming year is a particularly timely year for such a hiatus, since we will be disrupted in any event by the extensive building activities.

With a new dean in place, I have every confidence that we will pick up where we left off and that our momentum will continue unabated. I am staking my professional career on this, since I plan to be back at IU, after a one-year leave of absence, as an active member of the law faculty. In the interim, the School will be led by Acting Dean Maurice Holland. Dean Holland served as my associate dean this past year, and I was delighted with his appointment as interim dean. I am also confident that the School will continue to have the support and personal commitment of President Ryan and Vice-President Gros Louis—they both understand the school, its needs and its opportunities. They have been enormously supportive during my tenure; with their help and that of the Board of Trustees, we can continue to look forward to a bright future.

As I indicated, I will be on leave of absence for the academic year 1984-85, as will my wife, Ilene. Most of the year we will be at Stanford University Law School in California. While I look forward to the opportunity to catch up on my professional work and to reacquaint myself with what has been happening in my field these seven years, I shall miss seeing the many friends we have made in Indiana. Ilene and I appreciate genuinely the warmth and friendship we have had from so many alumni and friends of the school. We look forward to continuing those friendships in the years ahead.

Sheldon J. Plager