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Hail and Farewell, William Mitchell Law Review

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HAIL AND FAREWELL, *WILLIAM MITCHELL LAW REVIEW*

Douglas Heidenreich[†]

Being the oldest person around the law school (either William Mitchell College of Law or the nascent Mitchell Hamline School of Law) is an advantage and a disadvantage. It is an advantage because people, though often bored and searching for an escape, feel like the wedding guest held by the piercing gaze of the Ancient Mariner, compelled to listen when you start to ramble about the old days. It is a disadvantage because people expect you to remember and comment upon the old days, like a well-trained dog responding to the command, “Roll over.” I have been in this situation for some years, and thus I have been asked to write something for this final issue of the *Law Review* under William Mitchell leadership.

When I agreed to provide some thoughts for this final issue, I asked for copies of what I wrote as an introduction to the first issue of the *Law Review* in 1974. I discovered that my comments on that first-ever issue of the publication constituted a paean to those intrepid students who, doubtlessly not appreciating the difficulty of the task that they were undertaking, had entered choppy, uncharted waters, guided by their captain, the then-young professor Mike Steenson. Against all odds,¹ they produced an excellent product. And they and their successors continued to produce a high-quality journal that was, contrary to the traditional standard, useful to courts and practitioners.²

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1. William Mitchell College of Law was a night law school; its students were, almost without exception, part-time students who came on four evenings each week from their “day jobs” to night law classes. How could these students find the time and energy to produce anything, much less a fine, useful publication?

2. The great twentieth century law professor and iconoclast, Fred Rodell, once wrote, “I suspect that the law reviews will keep right on turning out stuff that is not fit to read, on subjects that are not worth the bother of writing about them.”

The First Mate on this fragile vessel³ was a brilliant law student, Marcy Wallace. As the first Editor-in-Chief she spent long hours prodding authors and assembling and overseeing the editing of the first pieces. Marcy, of course, does not deserve all the credit. Other students also put in countless hours of work and enormous effort to launch and steer the ship. Still, Marcy's leadership was a critical factor in the initial success of the journal.

So now, after a voyage of more than forty years, the vessel has returned to port, still proudly flying the *William Mitchell Law Review* flag.⁴ But this is the end—no, not the end, but this issue will herald the continuance of a fine journal, stronger than ever, with the added strength of another excellent publication—the *Hamline Law Review*. The first voyage has ended; the ship is safely back in the harbor. Following refitting, she will begin another exciting voyage under a new flag.

Fred Rodell, *Goodbye to Law Reviews*, 23 VA. L. REV. 38, 45 (1936).

3. I apologize for the nautical metaphors. I recently finished reading a book about the nineteenth century tragedy of the whaleship, *Essex*. Heck of a story!

4. "Ay, tear her tattered ensign down," wrote Oliver Wendell Holmes, father of the great U.S. Supreme Court Justice, in a poem about Old Ironsides, the frigate *Constitution*, when that vessel was threatened with destruction. The *William Mitchell Law Review's* ensign still flies untattered.