

William Tucker Dean

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William Tucker Dean graced the faculty of the Cornell Law School from the time of his appointment as Associate Professor in 1953 until his retirement as Professor Emeritus in 1988. His academic pedigree included a Bachelor's degree from Harvard, a law degree from the University of Chicago and a M.B.A. degree from Harvard's Business School. Between his law and business degrees, he served in the Army for three years. Following a brief assignment as a private, he became an officer in the Army Transportation Corps, with overseas service in the Pacific Theater as a Lieutenant and Captain, principally with the 96th Infantry Division in the Philippines. Before coming to Cornell, he had taught at the law schools of the University of Kansas and Texas for a summer term.

At Cornell, Tucker's basic teaching interests revolved around trusts and estates, a field that encompassed estate and gift taxation, fiduciary administration and family law. He authored a number of law review articles in this field, together with many devoted to legal history. Meanwhile he served on a vast panorama of committees within the Law School as well as the broader university. During his tenure, the New York State Law Revision Commission was based at the Law School and he not only put in a stint as its Associate Director for Research, but also drafted various statutes calculated to rationalize work-a-day New York law.

Many a senior member of today's university faculty, not to mention innumerable alumni, will recall also that Tucker, between 1962 and 1990, served the outside community as the Village Justice in Cayuga Heights. Professor Dean as Judge Dean was dedicated to the proposition that a posted 30 miles-per-hour speed limit meant precisely that, a maximum speed of 30 miles-per-hour. Thus on the bench, he presented a formidable formal presence, and this mien carried over into his appearances behind the classroom lectern. And all the while, Tucker chose to walk at a brisk pace between his home and the Village and the Law School, the Village Hall, downtown, or wherever it was he was headed about the town, always carrying himself in a very erect military manner.

To have accepted these appearances as the last word was to miss the delight of knowing the very humanely decent, witty and fun-loving person that lay behind the veneer. His wit was quick and cut to the nub of the matter, as when he manhandled a cigarette machine into the office of a sober colleague who had just forsworn nicotine. And there are those who recall fondly the time that, during the interminable student protests about the Vietnam War, his Myron Taylor Hall teaching was disturbed by the loudspeaker noise from across the street. Tucker's was an old

soldier's answer to the problem: he applied a pair of wire cutters to the electric cord powering the apparatus. But again, one has to recall, these were pre-political correctness days, happy days as it were.

This same informal *joie-de-vie* characterized the hospitality ever present at the home occupied by Tucker and his wife Ann, and their four children. As fate would have it, Ann died in the year of Tucker's retirement. Then it was that he married Rosamond Arthur and moved to Long Island where, until illness overcame him, he was able to continue to enjoy domestic life while contemplating the world around him with wry acumen more often encountered in a poet than a lawyer.

Let it be recalled, finally, that whenever there arose a last minute need to find a teacher for some Law School course or other, it was William Tucker Dean who would step in and undertake the thankless job of spending hour upon hour to bone up on a subject he might never again teach. These must have been particularly onerous chores given his wide-ranging interests in the literature of contemporary law and politics. Duty to the larger community was an idea deeply rooted in his mind-set and he never failed to perform that duty as he perceived it.

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