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### A Tribute to Ernest A. Raba, Dean (1946 – 1978), St. Mary's University School of Law

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**A TRIBUTE TO ERNEST A. RABA, DEAN (1946–1978),  
ST. MARY’S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW**

**ALOYSIUS A. LEOPOLD\***

Dean Ernest A. Raba (1912–2007) was born of German immigrant parents in San Antonio, Texas on December 1, 1912. He attended grammar school at his parish, St. Joseph Parochial School, and high school at St. Mary’s Academy, the Marianist predecessor to Central Catholic. After graduation from high school, Dean Raba attended St. Mary’s University in San Antonio where he graduated *summa cum laude* in 1934. He then went on to attend St. Mary’s University School of Law where he graduated in 1937 at the top of his class.

From law school he began a practice of law, while at the same time teaching in the law school as an adjunct professor. After serving in the Judge Advocate General Corps during World War II, he returned to San Antonio in 1946. Soon thereafter, Mr. Raba was appointed dean of St. Mary’s University School of Law. As his first act of service in a stellar career spanning thirty-two years, Dean Raba obtained accreditation for the law school from the American Bar Association and, shortly after, membership in the Association of American Law Schools.

Dean Raba was instrumental in obtaining financing for three new buildings: a library, a classroom building, and a faculty office building which were subsequently built in 1967 on the University’s Woodlawn campus. The funding for these buildings came from a \$610,000 grant and a \$912,000 loan from the U.S. Department of

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\* Professor of Law, St. Mary’s University School of Law. B.A., J.D., St. Mary’s University. Professor Leopold has been a law professor at St. Mary’s since 1967. Alongside the late Dean Raba and Dean Cantu, Professor Leopold was one of the original supporters of the *St. Mary’s Law Journal*.



Health, Education, and Welfare under Title II of the Higher Education Facilities Act. The regulations of this agency did not allow for grants to law schools, and the application submitted by the University was initially denied. However, Dean Raba then enlisted the help of his good friend, Phil Kazen of Laredo, who had the ear of Texas Governor John Connally, and Lyndon B. Johnson, then President of the United States. Through their assistance, the regulations were amended and the application was approved within twenty days. The law school moved from downtown San Antonio to the University campus in December 1967. During this time, Dean Raba was also the vice president for development under University President Father Louis Blume, and was instrumental in obtaining the financing for other University projects, such as the University library; additionally he was one of the original trustees of the Albert B. Alkek Trust which funded the new business school building.

Furthermore, Dean Raba was instrumental in laying the framework for a \$7.5 million grant from the Sarita Kenedy East Foundation, which financed the building of a new law library and the renovation of the old library into the faculty office building. The new faculty office building is named the Ernest A. Raba Building in honor of Dean Raba. In 1967, at the request of a group of highly motivated and able students, Dean Raba laid the groundwork for the establishment of a law journal at St. Mary's University School of Law by the appointment of a faculty committee to study the feasibility of such an endeavor. With a favorable nod from the committee, these students formed the nucleus of the first board and writers of the *St. Mary's Law Journal*, which published its first edition in 1969. While serving as dean, Mr. Raba was also a professor in the law school, teaching courses in ethics, agency and partnership, and constitutional law. He was a friendly, guiding hand to the students. His office was located immediately next to the entrance to the law school at its "downtown" location, and Dean Raba loved to stand in the doorway of his office and greet the students by name when they entered the building.

In its foundation and developing years, Dean Raba *was* the law school. By his singular efforts, he led the law school out of the wilderness into the promised land.

