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Michael Ariens

St. Mary's University School of Law, mariens@stmarytx.edu

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TRIBUTE

A TRIBUTE TO GERALD S. “GEARY” REAMEY

MICHAEL S. ARIENS*

I met Geary Reamey more than thirty-five years ago. He had little, if any, idea that he would serve as a mentor to me as I adjusted to life as a law school faculty member. Likely more surprising to him, he has served as my mentor and guide for thirty-five years and counting.

Geary Reamey began teaching at St. Mary’s University School of Law in the Fall 1982 semester.¹ He will have taught for forty-one years at St. Mary’s when he retires in May 2023. Geary is known throughout Texas for his work, both as a speaker and as a writer, educating lawyers and judges about Texas criminal law and procedure. He is known among St. Mary’s Law alumni for creating and operating, along with the late John Schmolesky, a vibrant criminal law and procedure curriculum, including the first-year Criminal Law course. Roughly 3,000 St. Mary’s law students have taken Geary’s Criminal Law class. Many returned to take his upper-level courses in Texas Criminal Procedure and Constitutional Criminal Procedure, among other related courses; others sought to take those upper-level courses based on his reputation for excellent teaching. Some graduates best remember him for a subject other than criminal law or procedure, as Geary has taught over a dozen courses during his career at St. Mary’s.² Additionally, many

*Aloysius A. Leopold Professor of Law, St. Mary’s University School of Law.

1. *Gerald S. Reamey*, ST. MARY’S UNIV. SCH. OF LAW, <https://law.stmarytx.edu/academics/faculty/gerald-reamey/> [https://perma.cc/27SM-68LE].

2. *Id.*

graduates remember him as the co-founder, along with Professor Vincent Johnson, of the St. Mary's Institute on World Legal Problems in Innsbruck, Austria, in 1986.³ The program, after a brief pandemic-related hiatus, continues to prosper.

In addition to his teaching, Geary has written a tremendous number of articles and books. He has written practical articles for practicing lawyers and think pieces aimed at legal scholars and law students. He has succeeded in writing well for different audiences at different times, making his works influential in law practice and among professors of criminal law and procedure. His works include, among other books, *Texas Criminal Procedure*, in its thirteenth edition, and a recent work, *Principles of Texas Criminal Law*.⁴ And before he leaves law teaching, he has written a book that will guide new and experienced law professors alike: *How Not to be a Terrible Teacher (And Maybe be a Good One)*, which is under contract and will be published in 2023.

His title, *How Not to be a Terrible Teacher (And Maybe be a Good One)*, expresses much of Geary's view of lawyers, law professors, and those in the helping professions. You can effectively serve others only if you initially do them no harm. A law teacher's job is first, to lead students to understand that they are learning so they will not hurt the cases of their future clients. Once this is accomplished, then the law teacher seeks ways in which to encourage students to reach for excellence. The law teacher's job is not to praise students who are occasionally adequate but to persuade them to stretch themselves in the service of others. As Geary wrote in a tribute to his favorite law professor, "He simply conveyed, as he did in every class, every encounter, every conversation, that we were doing the most important work in the world, and that nothing less than the very best—not just *our* very best, but *the* very best—would ever be good enough for [] clients."⁵

Geary later returned to his law school alma mater, Southern Methodist University, to obtain an LL.M. in order to enter law teaching. Walter Steele, Geary's favorite professor, agreed to serve as Geary's thesis advisor. As Geary noted in his tribute to Professor Steele, the thesis was written, edited, re-written, and edited again, over and over. What he learned from this process was that "[e]verything can be done better, and it will be if our expectations are high enough and our self-discipline strong enough to see it

3. *Id.*

4. *Id.*

5. Gerald S. Reamey, *Professor Steele's Opus*, 64 J. AIR L. & COM. 657, 657 (1999) (emphasis added).

through.”⁶ Compliments, though always welcomed, were not what drove him to polish and polish again his master’s thesis. Instead, it was “the satisfaction that comes from knowing that it is as good as you can make it.”⁷

That sense of mastery of one’s craft has infused Geary’s teaching and scholarship through the entirety of our friendship. It is one reason why he has served as my mentor these many years.

What Geary also brought to the School of Law every day was his dedication to work that some faculty members occasionally discount: service to the School of Law, to the University, and to the broader community in San Antonio and Texas. In nearly all law schools, service work, though crucial to the school’s operation, is devalued compared with teaching and scholarship. Excellence in service is too rarely rewarded, either with pay raises or through praise from one’s colleagues. But it must be done, and done well, if a law school is to accomplish its job of shaping professionals who serve others. Geary has always understood the importance of service to others. He has served on innumerable law school committees, many of which were crucial to the law school’s success. He served in a largely thankless but, again, necessary role as Associate Dean.⁸ He has worked to make the University a better institution. And his work on behalf of his undergraduate alma mater, Trinity University, his several decades of service in behalf of the United Way, and his service to practicing lawyers and judges in his speeches and articles have positively affected San Antonio, Texas, and the Texas legal profession.

The School of Law has suffered from some “conflict” and tumult occasionally during Geary’s four decades professing law. Whenever conflict arose, Geary’s strongest character trait revealed itself: his absolute integrity. The School of Law was at a crossroads when I moved to San Antonio in August 1987. I was unaware of the fissures that then existed,⁹ though this division quickly became clear. Geary was a popular teacher but never used students as an instrument for his personal benefit. Instead of using his popularity to aid himself, Geary instead insisted on focusing on doing his

6. *Id.* at 659.

7. *Id.*

8. *Gerald S. Reamey*, ST. MARY’S UNIV. SCH. OF LAW, <https://law.stmarytx.edu/academics/faculty/gerald-reamey/> [<https://perma.cc/27SM-68LE>].

9. See Charles E. Cantu, *An Oral History of the St. Mary’s University School of Law (1961–2018)*, 50 ST. MARY’S L.J. 309, 354–55, 354 n.139, 366–67 (2019) (describing tensions at the law school in the early 1980s).

job to “*the very best.*”¹⁰ Fortunately for more than thirty subsequent classes of law students, Geary’s qualities as a teacher, scholar, and in service were recognized with an award of tenure. He remained a rigorous, self-disciplined, and respected (and popular) teacher of future lawyers. We celebrate Geary’s extraordinary career in this tribute to his accomplishments.

Throughout the last forty years, Geary has staked out his positions on institutional issues large and small based on what is right for the institution. He has never promoted or opposed a proposal requiring faculty approval by assessing it in light of his private interests. His views (and votes) have always been made by considering the best interests of the institution, including the institution’s interest in promoting faculty governance. When we have disagreed, we sounded out each other’s perspective to test our own. When we agreed, but found ourselves in the minority of the faculty, we continued to assess whether we had erred in judgment.

For the past twenty years or so, our offices have been next to one another. We have had countless informal conversations, as our office doors were almost always open, about law, teaching law, and serving students. We have eaten lunch, usually with Professor Mather and the late Professor Douglas Haddock, several thousand times, and we never (or, at least, I never) tired of discussing ways to make the School of Law incrementally better. Geary’s counsel and advice has been invaluable to me and to many others on the faculty. When I am uncertain about any issue, I ask Geary about it, and I happily receive blunt advice. I will miss his biting wit and thorough assessments in faculty meetings. I will miss his integrity in every action and decision he took in professional service. I wish him and his fiercely intelligent wife Kay the very best.

10. Reamey, *supra* note 5, at 657.