

The following is an excerpt from Chapter Twelve of *Florida's First Law School: A History of Stetson University College of Law*.\*

## A DIFFERENT DEAN

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After a six-month national search for a new dean, one that produced several strong candidates, Stetson University President Pope Duncan appointed Bruce R. Jacob, then dean of the Walter F. George School of Law at Mercer University, to be dean of Stetson College of Law.<sup>1</sup> Jacob was the favorite of the search committee chaired by Professor Calvin Kuenzel, and consisting of Amory Underhill ('36), chairperson of the Board of Overseers; Cecil Bailey ('27), president of the Charles A. Dana Law Center Foundation; Earl Edington, past-president of the University Board of Trustees; Douglas Lee, University Vice President for development; and four College of Law professors: McGruder Faris, Ruth Thurman, Robert Bickel, and William Eleazer.<sup>2</sup> With outstanding credentials—his resume had “111 separate listings”<sup>3</sup>— Jacob returned to his law school alma mater in the summer of 1981. A 1959 Stetson graduate, Jacob was the eleventh dean in the then eighty-first year of the law school's existence.<sup>4</sup>

### I. BUSHROD

Jacob was dean of the Stetson College of Law from 1981 through 1994. His title as dean notwithstanding, many Stetson

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1. *Bruce Jacob, '59, Will Succeed Dillon as Dean*, 25 STETSON LAW 1, 1 (May 1981).

2. *Id.*

3. *Id.*

4. The earlier Stetson College of Law deans were, in order, Farrah, Rasco, Tribble, Raymond, Lambert, Howes, Haslup, Hilkey, Sebring, and Dillon.

alumni throughout that period called him “Bushrod.”<sup>5</sup> Therein lies a revealing story about Jacob’s character.

The anecdote begins in 1957, shortly after Bruce enrolled as a law student at Stetson. He was sitting in a constitutional law class taught by Professor Roy Howes. Jacob recalls, “I loved to hear Dr. Howes talk about the history and background of the Constitution.”<sup>6</sup> In one class, Howes spoke about Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* and urged the students to read the seminal book.<sup>7</sup> Another day, the class discussed the case of *Corfield v. Coryell*, decided by a federal judge named Bushrod Washington. Howes told the students that the judge was George Washington’s nephew, noting that “Bushrod spit tobacco” while presiding over court. Howes urged his class to “read about Bushrod Washington.”<sup>8</sup> Jacob relates what happened next:

When [Howes] said to read about the judge, I was intrigued and wrote in my class notes: “Read about Bushrod Washington.” My friend sitting next to me saw what I had written and he couldn’t stop laughing. He and the other students [who had been in law school longer] would never read Montesquieu or about Bushrod Washington because they knew these readings were not required, [that] there would be nothing on the exam about these subjects. . . . After class he told the other students what I had written in my notes. And from that day to this my nickname has been “Bushrod.”<sup>9</sup>

Though a few still call Jacob “Bushrod,” most faculty, staff, and students refer to him as “Bruce,” “dean,” or “professor.” Today, when Jacob teaches *Corfield v. Coryell* in his constitutional law class, he tells his students about how he got the name “Bushrod,” adding that they can call him that if they wish.

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5. Jacob explains: “In law school we all had nicknames. One day, when I was Dean, my secretary, Dorothy Bishop, received a phone call from a former classmate of mine, Circuit Judge John Miller in Ft. Lauderdale. He said ‘Tell ‘Bushrod’ that ‘Bwana’ is on the phone.’”

6. Bruce Jacob, *My Recollections What It Was Like to Be a Stetson Law Student and Graduate; The Move to Gulfport* 1 (Sept. 1, 1999) (on file at the Stetson U. College of L., Gulfport, Fla.) [hereinafter Jacob, *Recollections*].

7. *Id.*

8. Interview by Michael I. Swygert, Prof. Emeritus, Stetson U. College of L. with Bruce R. Jacob, Dean Emeritus, Stetson U. College of Law, *Stetson University College of Law Oral History Project*, 30 (Apr. 14, 2004) (on file at Stetson U. College of L., Gulfport, Fla.).

9. Jacob, *Recollections*, *supra* n. 7, at 1.

Born in 1935 in Chicago, Illinois, Jacob spent his early childhood in Indiana, then moved back to Illinois for a few years.<sup>10</sup> When sixteen, he and his family moved from Hinsdale, Illinois, to Sarasota, Florida.<sup>11</sup> In high school, he participated in high school football, track, basketball, and was state champion in the half mile. His athletic skills earned him a partial track scholarship at Florida State University. A serious student, Jacob achieved the highest academic average of varsity athletes at FSU during his attendance, being a member of the FSU varsity basketball and track teams. Also, he received a partial scholarship to play in the first violin section of the University's symphony orchestra.

Jacob received his B.A. degree from FSU in 1957, and then earned his J.D. degree in 1959 from Stetson College of Law. President of the Student Bar Association, Jacob graduated second in his class. Over time, Jacob was admitted to practice in Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Ohio,<sup>12</sup> and Jacob accepted a job as Special Assistant and Assistant Attorney General, State of Florida.<sup>13</sup> In that position,<sup>14</sup> he argued on behalf of Florida—the respondent—in the landmark United States Supreme Court case of *Gideon v. Wainwright*.<sup>15</sup> Jacob soon left his position as assistant attorney general and joined the Florida law firm of Holland, Bevis & Smith (later Holland & Knight), where he remained until 1964, when he left the firm to earn a graduate (LL.M.) degree in law from Northwestern University School of Law.

He next joined the Emory University School of Law faculty in 1965, teaching both criminal law and criminal procedure.<sup>16</sup> At Emory, he started a program to provide legal assistance to inmates incarcerated in the United States Penitentiary in Atlanta. In one case, he was appointed by the Supreme Court to represent a federal inmate in *Kaufman v. United States*.<sup>17</sup> Jacob decided to

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10. Am. Assn. of L. Schs. *The AALS Directory of Law Teachers 204–2005*, 600 (West Pub. Co., 2004) [hereinafter *AALS 2004–2005 Directory*].

11. Bruce Vielmetti, *Dean Pulled Stetson Up a Notch*, ST. PETE TIMES B-1 (June 20, 1994).

12. *Id.*

13. Jacob, *Gideon*, *supra* n. 16.

14. 372 U.S. 335 (1963).

15. Bruce R. Jacob, *Memories and Reflections about Gideon v. Wainwright*, 33 STETSON L. REV. 181, 181 (Fall 2003) [hereinafter Jacob, *Gideon*].

16. *Id.*

17. Jacob won the case and Harold Kaufman was released about eleven years before he normally would have been discharged from federal custody. Kaufman then infiltrated organized crime in New Jersey for the F.B.I. and was responsible for sending a number of

attend Harvard Law School to obtain an S.J.D. degree. There, he served as a research associate at the Center for Criminal Justice at Harvard University Law School (1969–70), and then as a staff attorney at the Cambridge Legal Assistance Office (1970–71), where he supervised Harvard Law students in the defense of criminal cases of indigent defendants.<sup>18</sup>

By 1971, Jacob had become an experienced criminal defense and poverty lawyer. He accepted the position of associate professor on the tenure track at Ohio State University College of Law.<sup>19</sup> In 1973, he was named Professor of Law and Director of Clinical Programs at Ohio State, positions he held until 1978, when he became dean of the Mercer University School of Law.<sup>20</sup> Mercer had neither a placement office, nor funds to hire a placement director, so Jacob's wife, Ann, served as the school's volunteer director. In 1981, Jacob relinquished his Mercer deanship when he became dean and vice-president of Stetson University College of Law.<sup>21</sup>

## II. HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS

In October 1981, Carlos Enriquez, editor of the Stetson law school student newspaper, *Prelude*, interviewed the law school's new dean, Bruce Jacob.<sup>22</sup> According to published excerpts, Jacob described his role and policies as "different from [those of] former Dean Dillon's," pointing out that "I don't know enough about the way things were done when [Dillon] was dean, but I know we have different personalities, so obviously there will be some differences."<sup>23</sup> Jacob explained that he had enjoyed his time as a Stetson law student due to positive relations he had had with Dean Sebring, Justice Brand, Dick Dillon and others, and his friendships with fellow students. Jacob said that he wanted "to make Stetson a very happy and pleasant place for students, but this doesn't mean," he added, "that it's not going to be tough academically."<sup>24</sup>

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members of organized crime to prison. His experience turned into a movie entitled "A Deadly Business." Alan Arkin played Kaufman's part. Kaufman was placed in the Federal Witness Protection Program.

18. *Id.*

19. *Id.*

20. *AALS 2004–2005 Directory*, *supra* n. 11, at 600.

21. *Id.*

22. *Carlos Enriquez Interview with Dean Jacob*, 11 *PRELUDE* 1 (Oct. 1, 1981).

23. *Id.* at 2.

24. *Id.*

Jacob commented that he hoped to foster a new attitude of friendship at the school:

Since this is a relatively small school [around 500 students at the time], one of its potentials is to develop close relationships among students, faculty and staff. This is one advantage we have to offer, and I want to encourage it. Everybody ought to know everybody here; law school should be a friendly experience where lifetime friendships are formed.<sup>25</sup>

Jacob's desire that the law school become a more user-friendly community reflected, and still reflects, his positive, yet realistic view of human nature. "There's something beautiful in every human being," he told the *Prelude* reporter, adding, "I have liked just about every [person] I have ever known, including clients who were criminals."<sup>26</sup> Above all, Jacob emphasized that he especially respected "people who are concerned about other people."<sup>27</sup>

When it came to the new dean's expectations, Jacob, like Dillon before him, clearly understood that running a law school is a joint-governance operation involving both the dean and the faculty. "There are many goals to be accomplished," he said, "but I am skeptical about how much difference the dean alone can make," explaining his view that the dean is analogous to the president or governor, and the faculty to Congress or the Legislature.<sup>28</sup> Working together, Jacob believed, the school would move forward.

### III. GOALS—CHANGE ATTITUDES AND MAKE SCHOOL FRIENDLIER

Though he gave credit to his predecessor, Dean Dillon, and to the faculty for successfully raising academic standards during the 1970s, Jacob nonetheless believed that the school's tough grading pattern throughout that decade, high academic attrition rates, and the rigidity of the administration and staff enforcement of "strict rules," caused many law students to harbor feelings of hostility

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25. *Id.*

26. *Id.* at 1. Jacob helped obtain the release of two Atlanta inmates who had been exceptionally able jailhouse lawyers, and put them to work helping him supervise Emory Law students "working on legal matters of inmates in the Emory Legal Assistance for Inmates" program that he had established. Their salaries were paid under a National Legal Aid and Defender Foundation grant.

27. *Id.*

28. *Id.* at 2.

toward the school both during and after their tenure there.<sup>29</sup> The hostile attitudes, moreover, persisted at the school when Jacob became dean. He based his belief “on my observations, on discussions I had with students, faculty members, and alumni at the time, and on the written evaluations of faculty teaching by students.”<sup>30</sup> Looking back two decades later, Jacob comments that his “greatest problem” was “to improve the attitudes of our students toward their faculty, their administration and school.”<sup>31</sup> He explains why changing the school’s atmosphere and the attitudes of students, faculty, and staff were necessary:

My philosophy has always been that law school should be a pleasant place. It does not have to be an unpleasant environment for students to learn. During my early days here, I found that students were extremely unhappy with staff, among other things, and I was not at all happy with the attitude of some of our staff toward our students.<sup>32</sup>

Not long after becoming dean, Jacob suggested to the faculty and staff that the students were the school’s “customers,” and that “they are paying a great deal of money to [Stetson] and that our salaries depend upon the students.”<sup>33</sup> He told the staff that they should assume they were working “at a luxury hotel and the students were our guests.”<sup>34</sup> In short, Dean Bruce Jacob wanted to transform the school’s atmosphere.

Jacob had no intention, however, that by making the school friendlier he would precipitate a relaxation of academic standards. During his deanship, Stetson graduates scored 100 percent on one bar examination, and usually ranked first or second among Florida law schools. When the thirteen years of Jacob’s deanship are

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29. Bruce R. Jacob, *Report on the Bruce Jacob Deanship At Stetson University College of Law, 1981-1994*, at 1, 2 (2000) (on file at Stetson U. College of L., Gulfport, Fla.) [hereinafter Jacob, *Report on Deanship*]. Jacob wrote: “Probably the most important task as dean was to build goodwill and good feelings about the law school among all of its constituencies—students, faculty, staff, university administrators, alumni, and the community.” *Id.*

30. *Id.* at 2.

31. *Id.*

32. *Id.*

33. *Id.* at 3.

34. *Id.* According to Jacob, during his thirteen years as dean he fired or caused to resign fourteen faculty and staff members because of their negative attitudes toward students. He insisted that new staff members be hired through a national search, and that students be included in interviewing candidates, telling him who they preferred.

combined, Stetson's cumulative passing percentage during that period was first in the state.<sup>35</sup>

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35. Jacob, *Report on Deanship*, *supra* n. 30, at 11.