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A Tribute to Mary Lawrence

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By Ruth Vance

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In 1986, after completing my first year teaching legal writing at Valparaiso University School of Law, I sat listening to Mary Lawrence speak about evaluating students' legal writing during the second conference of the Legal Writing Institute at the University of Puget Sound. Oh, how I wished I'd heard her presentation before I'd muddled through my first year of teaching.

The many people I met at that conference, including Mary, brought me out of the isolated feeling that I had experienced; finally, I discovered that I was not alone in my search for a legal writing pedagogy and a voice in the legal academy. I could commiserate with most of my new-found friends, but Mary Lawrence provided us the pedagogy we sought and the support we needed to find our voices in the academy. Mary Lawrence was one of a handful of pioneers in the field of legal writing in 1986 who had started developing the teaching of legal writing as a profession.

Mary Lawrence played a vital role in introducing legal writing teachers to the wealth of relevant knowledge in the fields of English and rhetoric. She provided part of the foundation on which the Legal Writing Institute was built. She was among the founders of the Legal Writing Institute and the Association of Legal Writing Directors. The AALS Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research benefitted from her leadership. Mary authored books and articles, planned programs and workshops, and made numerous presentations that advanced the field of legal writing. She gave the necessary continuity of knowledge to legal writing professors while the struggle to promote legal writing as a legitimate discipline within the legal academy continued. Her tireless dedication to the discipline continues even after her retirement from the University of Oregon School of Law.

More importantly, Mary taught us and continues to teach us, by example, to be part of a supportive community. Without any prompting, Mary began calling me periodically to offer recognition, encouragement, and support. I am most thankful for her mentoring and thoughtfulness over the years.

Mary also knows how vital it is for us to celebrate our discipline and our colleagues' successes. She documented the history of the Legal Writing Institute and its accomplishments in a recent

article.³ She prompted us to take the time to reflect and celebrate that twenty year history. With her phone calls, notes, and visits during conferences, Mary makes sure we take time to celebrate our relationships and our achievements.

What lessons Mary has taught me! I hope I never forget her lessons to include, support, encourage, and celebrate my legal writing colleagues.

3. Lawrence, *supra* n. 1.