
Volume 73
Issue 2 *Dickinson Law Review - Volume 73,*
1968-1969

1-1-1969

Morris L. Shafter A Personal Portrait

Donald J. Farage

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ideas.dickinsonlaw.psu.edu/dlra>

Recommended Citation

Donald J. Farage, *Morris L. Shafter A Personal Portrait*, 73 DICK. L. REV. 198 (1969).
Available at: <https://ideas.dickinsonlaw.psu.edu/dlra/vol73/iss2/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Reviews at Dickinson Law IDEAS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dickinson Law Review by an authorized editor of Dickinson Law IDEAS. For more information, please contact lja10@psu.edu.

Morris L. Shafer . . . A Personal Portrait

Donald J. Farage*

Dickinson Law School has been blessed throughout its history, and, more particularly, during the Trickett-to-Laub era, in having not only distinguished, but dedicated, deans. Morris Shafer was no exception. During his tenure, the Law School was his life, after, as well as during, school hours. The loyalty and fervor with which he devoted himself to the interests of the School were characteristic of the man as an individual in his dealings with others. Those who were privileged to know him as a friend had in him a loyal and devoted one.

Becoming Morris Shafer's friend was a very particular experience. Scholarly, withdrawn, understated, Morris made his personal contacts quietly and without fuss, his innate reserve always uppermost, unobtrusive even in his flashes of dry humor. And then one day you felt the deep undercurrent of warmth and, gratefully, knew him for a friend.

He had a great sense of propriety always, so that it came as a delightful surprise that he enjoyed a mildly Rabelaisian tease. I do not know that the earth will actually stop turning if Dickinson ever has a dean who is not teetotal, though, if tradition has any weight, it well may. At a cocktail party, Morris would look very convivial with glass in hand, a few drops of happy water and a great deal of plain water; and, hours later, if you had paid close attention, you would realize that the level of liquid had lowered principally by evaporation. I therefore teased him about his powerful craving for "sauce". I will never forget the sight of him, on a foursome trip to Cuba on which I made some excuse to have him tote the Farages' quota of ten fifths as well as the Shafers' which they were turning over to us, plowing determinedly through the airport lugging what must have been his weight in liquor! I turned my movie camera on him and spoke sadly of my duty to warn the Board of Trustees that our very respectable Dean was a secret soak. He laughed so hard, he all but dropped the booze!

From "secret soak", it was only a very short step to "unregenerate womanizer". After our same foursome had, at a Miami convention, spent an evening laughing ourselves into the belly-ache at Buddy Hackett's inimitable "booze 'n' broads" routine, we

* Professor, Dickinson School of Law.

added another dimension to our catalogue of Morrie's "vices": that of the gay Lothario. We would make a great production of feigning sympathy for Mary—poor dear, with a husband so raffishly devoted to the enjoyment of booze and broads—and Morrie would sit with a Puckish grin on his face and a big twinkle in his eye and do his best to look very wicked, indeed. It was a monumental put-on, and he always got a great wallop out of it, even when he was in the hospital and about as able to do all the nurse-pinchings of which we roundly accused him as he was of running a three-minute mile with both feet in a bag.

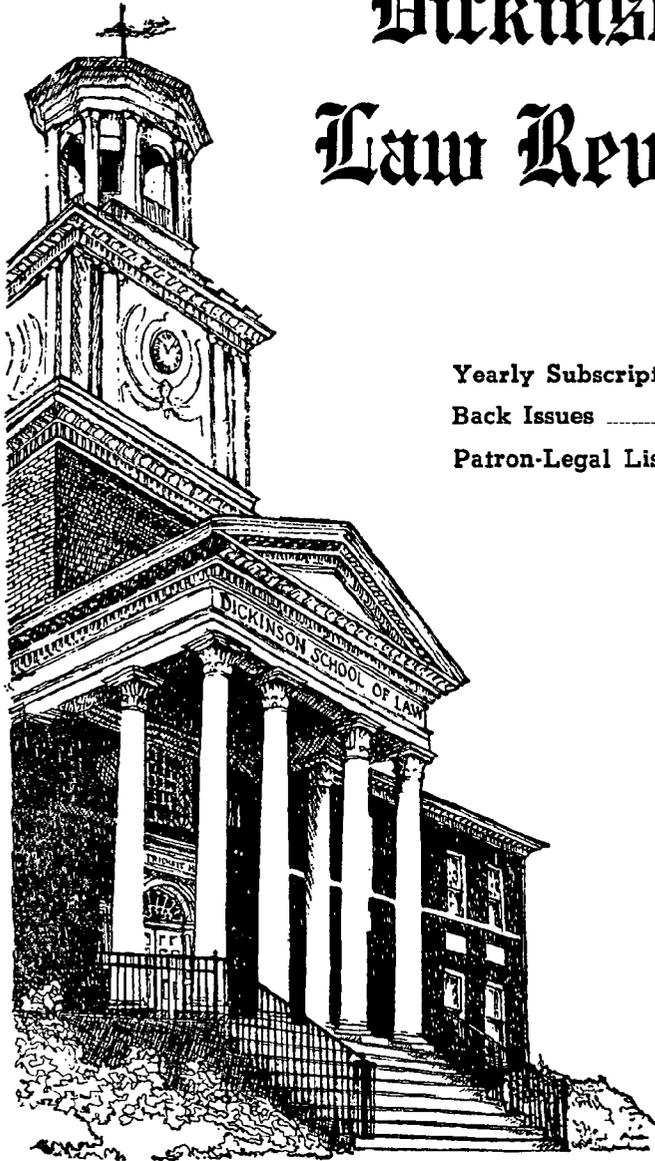
He never had a bit of trouble keeping his trim figure, and he incurred my great envy thereby, but it was no wonder. He was as moderate about food as he was about liquor, and, no matter what delicacy was offered, he had "won't power" to spare. He really did eat only to live; and, when I asked him how he had gotten to that enviable point, he would laugh and recall his early days when, he swore, he weighed two hundred pounds and ate everything that did not look like eating him first. Incredible!

Being Morris Shafer's friend was in one respect a decidedly one-way street. He could always be relied upon to listen attentively to whatever might be your plague of the moment, and to produce the kind of calm, rational comment that went a long way toward restoring your sense of proportion. He had plagues of the moment himself, I am sure, but he never wished them on anyone. It was contradictory, in a way, for, as Dean, he was a great consultant, and took endless pains to discuss everything with the faculty and get the benefit of everyone's thinking; it was one of the characteristics which made him a very good administrator. On the personal level, however, he operated on the premise that his burdens were his own. He was not the man to rain on anyone's parade.

His rock-ribbed sense of duty and his intense love of his profession drove him to unflagging effort. He retained, even after his health failed and he could no longer work, a fierce zeal for keeping his professional hand in what was going on. He actually attended every session of the last meeting of the Third Judicial Conference, of which he was a dedicated member, at a time when, in fact, his days were short and it must have represented incredible difficulty. He was in those last weeks operating on sheer intestinal fortitude, of which he had the full quota.

Morris was not an easy man to know well. Those of us who did know him can attest that the rewards of his friendship were far more than proportionately great. To call him friend was a matter for pride and warmth and happiness. We miss him.

Dickinson Law Review



Yearly Subscription\$5.00

Back Issues\$2.00

Patron-Legal Listing .. \$5.00

Editorial Office

DICKINSON LAW REVIEW
DICKINSON SCHOOL OF LAW
CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA 17013