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## Judge Theodore McMillian—Symbol of America

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**EILEEN H. SEARLS:  
A NOBLE BIBLIOPHILE**

JOSEPH J. SIMEONE\*

Tucked away in an old anthology of “Great American Writers,” is an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson entitled “The American Scholar.”<sup>1</sup> In that beautiful essay, written in 1837, Emerson discusses the characteristics of a scholar, the wonderful world of books, and how the scholar and books give value to our society and improve our whole culture.<sup>2</sup> In it, he says “the theory of books is noble;” that books are the best influence on mankind; that each generation must write its own books for the next; that “man is the university of knowledge;” and that books inspire “the active soul.”<sup>3</sup> The education of a person, he says, comes from “nature,” from “books” and from “action.”<sup>4</sup> From books there comes forth a scholar—who “knows the world,” who is the “world’s eye” and the “world’s heart.”<sup>5</sup>

By being a “lover of books,” Eileen H. Searls has, for almost fifty years, personified those inspiring words of Emerson with quiet professionalism, and has been, and is, the “noble bibliophile” at Saint Louis University School of Law.

The Law Library is the descendant of a long history of recorded words and symbols. It is, as the World Encyclopedia tells us, a busy “workshop” where man seeks and researches knowledge.<sup>6</sup> The library is sometimes called the “memory of the human race,” and in law it is in the history of an ordered civilization.

Of course, “library” comes from the Latin for “books,” but today we not only have books but we have cyberspace, computers, microfilm, microfiche and all the other technology for the retrieval of information<sup>7</sup>.

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1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The American Scholar*, in RALPH WALDO EMERSON REPRESENTATIVE SELECTIONS WITH INTRODUCTIONS, BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND NOTES 51 (Harry Hayden Clark & Frederick I. Carpenter eds., 1934).

2. *See id.*

3. *Id.* at 54-56.

4. *Id.* at 61.

5. *Id.* at 62.

6. 12 WORLD BOOK ENCYCLOPEDIA 234-62 (1998).

7. *See id.* at 235.

Originally, the “books” were in the form of clay tablets, using a system of “cuneiform.” The Assyrians kept libraries in the form of tablets, which lay dormant until 1853, when Sir Henry Lanyard discovered a large “library” in Iraq.<sup>8</sup> Some of the tablets contained the law—the Code of Hammurabi. The Egyptians had libraries of papyrus scrolls made into “books.” Plato and Aristotle had great collections of such scrolls. Alexander the Great, the pupil of Aristotle, together with his successors founded a great library in Alexandria containing some 500,000 scrolls. From scrolls came paper invented by the Chinese, which reached Europe about the 12th century. The “modern” library was then and there born. In 1635, the Jesuits established the first college library in North America at Quebec.<sup>9</sup>

Today, the profession of librarianship<sup>10</sup> is a demanding one. Today’s law librarian must be much more than a “keeper” of books. Today, the modern law librarian must have a vision and purpose for the library, be a budget analyst, a public relations person, a personnel director, a computer expert, a psychologist, a policeman, and dedicated to the ideals of service. All this is essential because the law library is a special and unique institution. It houses the history of the common law from the Year Books forward, the reflections of a dynamic society and the prediction of future decisions.<sup>11</sup>

We, at Saint Louis University School of Law, have come a long way since the days, some fifty years ago, when I first came on the scene in 1947. At that time we had one librarian, Mildred Niedjakowski, and *no* staff, a library committee (I was the chairman) and some 20,000 law books housed on the second floor in one decrepit room at the old law school and a budget of some \$30,000.

When the law school closed during the war, many volumes were thrown out, and when it reopened in 1946, much had to be done. By 1951, the Vice President of the University ordered a survey of the law school to be done by an advisor to the American Bar Association. The advisor complimented the law school on its faculty and curriculum, but criticized the state of the library. Our then Dean, Alvin E. Evans, a library conscious dean at the University of Kentucky, asked Eileen Searls to come to be interviewed for the position of librarian.<sup>12</sup> My colleague, Robert Vining and I went to meet her at the airport.

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8. *See id.* at 258.

9. *See id.* at 262.

10. *See* Fred R. Shapers, *The Name of Our Profession*, reprinted in *SPIRIT OF LAW LIBRARIANSHIP: A READER* 15 (Roy M. Mersky & Richard A. Leiter, eds., 1991). The oldest name for librarian was “library keeper,” a term used in 1647. *Id.* By 1818, the term “librarian” was used. *Id.*

11. *See* Roy M. Mersky, *Administration of Academic Law Libraries*, in 1 *LAW LIBRARIANSHIP: A HANDBOOK* 13 (Heinz P. Mueller & Patrick E. Kehoe, eds., 1983).

12. *See* the story of hiring Eileen in Mark Neilson, *A History of Saint Louis University School of Law* 75 (1994). Miss Searls set about a program that was to double the collection in a

I have always dreamed, a la Walter Mitty, of being a casting director for a Hollywood studio and to be part of that industry. So, when Eileen Searls stepped off that plane from Wisconsin in 1952, I turned to Bob Vining and said—"If you were going to cast a law librarian for a movie you would look no further than Eileen Searls." She was hired. The essence of a librarian exuded from every fiber of her body. She has the knowledge, the education, the presence, the vision of building a great library and even the look of a librarian.

Since then how we have progressed. At that time we had only eight full time faculty members (either too young or too old), one librarian, some 20,000 or less books with an annual budget of \$30,000, and no air-conditioning. Eileen has been a major part of making the law school and the law library what it is today.

During her "watch" the library has grown greatly. It now has some 530,000 volumes, rare books, microfilm, microfiche, hundreds of computers, carrels, and a staff of some twenty members, - all in a pleasant, lighted, new setting. The law library provides access to the tools of legal research in every field of law—national, state, and international – with Westlaw, LEXIS, OVID, MEDLINE, and OCLC. We now rank 29th out of 182 accredited law schools for volumes held, 21st nationally in the number of hard copy titles and the largest law library in Missouri for volumes held. The library has now special information centers for health law, labor law, and the Smurfit Irish Law Center. Not only do we have the Irish Law Center, but we also have a contemporary Polish Law Collection, and a Jewish Law Center. We even have volumes in Japanese and Chinese, which, unfortunately, I cannot read.

In short, any researcher can find out about anything legal on an infinite number of topics anywhere in the world, and together with the Vatican Library at Pius XII, we have the historical and contemporary bodies of knowledge at our fingertips. Surely it is a remarkable place to tickle the mind.

And what of that young woman who came to us in 1952?

Eileen Haughey Searls was born in Wisconsin, the daughter of a University Professor who experimented with the life and death of fruit-flies. She received her B.A., J.D. and M.S.L.S. degrees from the University of Wisconsin and was admitted to the Wisconsin Bar in 1950. After a brief stint at the Yale Law School, she came to Saint Louis University in 1952 as an instructor and law-librarian. She has been here ever since. She progressed to an Assistant Professor in 1953, an Associate Professor in 1956 and a Professor in 1964.

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few years. The law journal collection was expanded. She became a "master" at trading duplicate volumes with libraries around the country. She would journey to Washington to get excess books from the Library of Congress. She would ride the train home after having arranged with Congresswoman Leonor K. Sullivan to have all the books shipped back to St. Louis on her franking privilege.

She is a member of many associations,<sup>13</sup> and is active in many professional activities.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the years she has received many an honor,<sup>15</sup> and has authored a number of articles.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout all these years she has assiduously followed the Librarian's Code of Ethics:

To provide the highest kind of service; to protect the user's right of privacy; to adhere to the principle of due process and equality of opportunity; to distinguish herself in her actions and statements; and to avoid situations in which personal interests outweigh library users, colleagues or the university.<sup>17</sup>

What a career; what a wonderful life. Surely, with Eileen's experience, background, her dedication to the ideals of the law and the law library, and her energetic efforts for almost fifty years, she is truly, in Emerson's words, a "noble" bibliophile.

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13. Her associations include: The American Bar Association, The Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, The Wisconsin Bar Association, The Catholic Library Association and the secretary of the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

14. She was the chair of the Council of Law Library Consortia, President of Mid-American Law School Library Consortium, Chair of the Associate of Jesuit Colleges and Universities Conference of Law Libraries, President and member of the Mid-American Association of Law Libraries, member, Southwestern Association of Law Libraries, and a member of the American Association of Law Libraries.

15. Some of these include: Woman of the Year, Women's Commission, St. Louis University; Distinguished Service to the Mid-America Association of Law Libraries (first honoree); outstanding Law Librarian of 1988.

16. *The Demise and Fall of Library Fungus*, 57 LAW LIBR. J. 209 (Edward M. Searls ed., 1964); Editor, Council of Law Library Consortia Newsletter; *Observations on Law School Rankings* in DONALD B. KING, LEGAL EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.

17. *See id.*