Tributes to Mary S. Lawrence

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How does one describe Mary? What has she meant to all of us and to our profession? When I have asked others these questions the answers I got included words like: “Extraordinary;” “Inspiring”; “Generous”; “Innovative”; “Elegant”; “Kind”; “Methodical”; “Creative”; “A Superb Mentor”; “A Grand Lady”; “A Role Model”; . . . well, you get the idea. She truly is one-of-a-kind.

Mary instituted the Legal Writing program at Oregon in 1978. Coincidentally, that was the same year I instituted Chicago-Kent’s three-year program, though I had taught the course many times before then. At that time, there were very few Legal Writing “programs” at American law schools. Legal Writing as a distinct course was not even taught at every school. At many schools, Legal Writing classes were taught by upper-level or graduate students. And there was almost no vehicle for those teachers actually in the field to meet one another, share ideas, and help with problems. The AALS section on Legal Writing and Research was of recent vintage, and membership was almost entirely librarians.

In 1980, as chair of the AALS Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning and Research (as it now was to be called) I induced the AALS to put on its first ever Workshop on Legal Writing and Research, in Louisville, Kentucky. It was at that conference I had the pleasure of meeting Mary for the first time. Forty-two people attended, including several other young people who became the early leaders in the field—e.g., Marilyn Walter, Chris Kunz, Helene Shapo, Norm Brand, James Bateman, and Grace Tonner. The conference was very good. But I learned so much more by the informal conversations we had within the group, similar to what goes on now at the Legal Writing Institute meetings. Remember, in those days there were only two or three student-oriented books, no listservs, and no regional conferences. Most of the teachers did not stay in the field, but either moved on to doctrinal teaching or left legal education entirely. I was so impressed by Mary and her
program at Oregon and, of course, by her personally. She had so many really great ideas.

At the second AALS Workshop, held in Chicago, in 1985, Mary brought along her dean, and they got to hear Marge Rombauer, Terry Phelps, George Gopen, and Laurel Oates, among others. Marge Rombauer and her innovative program especially impressed Mary, and they had become best friends. It was at that meeting that a group of people, including Mary, met to begin the formal creation of the Legal Writing Institute; as an informal group, Puget Sound had hosted what now is listed as its first program a year earlier.

In 1986, the now incorporated Legal Writing Institute held a terrific program at Puget Sound. Mary was a key presenter. Susan Brody and I shared the same thought: we were simply blown away by her talk about the process of legal writing she called “spiraling.” By that time, I had taught Legal Writing to approximately 1,000 students, and thought I knew what I was doing, but Mary’s talk made me reconsider and rethink everything I did.

The 1986 conference also marked the beginning of a lovely tradition of Mary’s. She hosted an incredible brunch at an exquisite hotel in Seattle for Chris Kunz, some other friends, and me. She arranged for us to have the best table, and one of the finest meals I ever had at that time. She has topped that one so many times since, at LWI meetings, or ALWD meetings, or AALS meetings, or just on visits to Chicago. She researches, plans well ahead of time, and chooses the finest restaurants. She keeps track and accommodates the tastes, preferences, and problems of all her guests. Thus, there always is salmon on the menu for Richard; wonderful vegetarian food for Lou and Jill; no shellfish or olive oil for me because of my allergies; and bottles of fine wine for all. We have to try to bribe the maitre d’s to not give her the check, but she always has outfoxed us by arranging payment before our arrival. She gets on the waiters if she feels the service is not up to her high standards, and enjoys to the fullest our enjoyment of her choice for the evening. The finest meal I’ve ever had in my life was arranged and hosted by Mary, at the Windsor Grill in New Orleans. The six of us who were her guests talked about that meal and Mary’s incredible hospitality for years thereafter.

Mary’s elegance is also apparent in her choices of hotels. When she visited Chicago several years ago, she chose a suite in the Peninsula Hotel, where visiting movie stars stay. Her suite
was the ultimate in class, with more electronic gizmos than I thought possible. For her next visit, she made very clear to the management of the classic Drake Hotel that her suite had to be on a high floor, overlooking Lake Shore Drive and Lake Michigan, and she got exactly what she asked for.

Professionally, Mary’s program at Oregon clearly became one of the best in the country. She supervised full-time teachers, most of whom she had previously taught as students, and whom she personally trained to her high standards of excellence. As chair of the AALS Section for two years, she put on two excellent programs. She also persuaded the AALS to hold another Legal Writing Workshop. I’m sure very few people can understand how difficult that was to accomplish, for the AALS had a policy against frequent workshops on the same subject matter, other than the annual one for clinical legal education. Mary planned the meeting to the “nth” degree to make sure that everyone who attended would take away something pedagogically useful, and would not just be exposed to a bunch of talking heads.

Unfortunately, about ten years ago, physical ailments affected Mary, and she almost lost use of her vocal chords. Her disability did not stop her from continuing to present her wisdom to the growing professionals in the field. Sometimes she had to use electronic enhancement for her whispered voice to be heard, but any strain we felt in listening was amply rewarded by the wisdom she spoke. She never failed to impress with some great idea, some wonderful insight.

I feel so honored to have known and learned from Mary Lawrence for all these years. As I said at the outset, she is one-of-a-kind—the very best kind.
I met Mary in the mid 1980s, a period of time when those of us committed to legal research and writing were first mobilizing our efforts to get the field recognized as a discipline. The first large-scale legal writing conference was held; the Legal Writing Institute was born; a relationship with the AALS section was established; and interdisciplinary topics were explored. We couldn't get enough time together: to discuss ideas; to share methods and materials; to dream of and envision curricula; and most importantly to establish a network and organization for us all. It was such an early time in fact, that—believe it or not—politics and status were actually not yet tackled head on, as we later would do so vigorously and zealously.

In those early years, Mary Lawrence stood among us as one of our greatest leaders, indeed as the quintessential "mentor," "mobilizer," and even "mother" so-to-speak. We held conferences as often as we could find the necessary resources, and every time, without exception, I learned something new and exciting from Mary, our mentor. Her presentations always taught me some new and innovative way of thinking about legal research and writing, materials to teach with, techniques for communicating, or methods of grading. There was always something—some idea or technique that she presented—that would make me want to rush back home to review my notes, apply them to the courses I taught, and master whatever it was as best as I could.

But Mary was not just a mentor for teaching, she was a mobilizer for the discipline; she pushed us to think and act like professionals. She preached the importance of creating an entity to give us status and professionalism. Indeed Mary was instrumental in the creation of the Legal Writing Institute. When it came time to tackle head on status and other political issues, she played an important leadership role. Her insights into how these issues could be uniquely tackled at different institutions became a topic for some of her presentations. Her ideas about the discipline together with her professional and political insights made her a perfect role model for all of us.
But it was Mary the colleague and friend—Mary the “mother,” so-to-speak—who would always make certain we actually had fun and developed lasting friendships and support. In each city where we met, she always found the most unique and inviting restaurants—at which she often held a party at her own expense—and asked many of us to dinner or lunch. Throughout the years, it has always been Mary who would let us know when one of us was in need of help or assistance. It was always Mary who kept in touch, who let each and every one of us know that we are on her mind and in her heart. To this day—indeed even through these tributes—it is Mary who brings us close together.

I can think of no other person in the field of legal research and writing who has played all these important and integral roles and who has given so much of herself—not merely professionally—but personally, unwaveringly, and deeply. It is an honor for me to express my gratitude to, admiration of, and respect for Mary Lawrence, who has had a profound impact on my career and my life.

With much love and appreciation, Susan Brody.
Mary was one of our earliest pioneers. She created and directed Oregon's legal writing program—a program far ahead of its time. She envisioned and exemplified professional standards that were rare in those days but that have become the core of our discipline today. When our early battles were being fought, Mary was there, lending support, wisdom, and encouragement. She is still there today, calling and emailing those she knows might need a friendly word. She is and always was an expert listener. When you come away from a conversation with Mary, you find that your own thoughts and plans are clearer and your courage is restored. As the issues in our discipline have shifted over the years, Mary has helped us keep our perspective, and she always reminds us that we must work together if we expect to make lasting progress.

Mary is particularly special to me because she was the first person to invite me into the legal writing community. In the late 1980s, I was teaching and coordinating a legal writing program, but I knew no other teachers outside my own school. I met Mary at an AALS Section program she had planned. After the program ended, I approached her with a timid question. She introduced me to others and made me feel welcome. She found a place for me on a committee and included me in future plans and communications. It is no exaggeration to say that Mary gave me this wonderful community of friends and colleagues. Then when I moved to Mercer, Mary stayed in touch with her encouragement and her advice. When I was least expecting it, Mary would email or call, just to let me know that she was thinking of me. She still does it today, over twenty years after I first met her. Mary exemplifies the best in all of us, and we are a far better, stronger community because of her long years of service and her faithful, caring friendship.
For three decades, Professor Mary Lawrence has shaped the infrastructure of the still-young profession of teaching Legal Writing and its associated skills. In 1977, she began to teach Legal Writing at her alma mater after graduating. In fledgling Legal Writing courses around the country, many other Legal Writing teachers (myself included) were hired directly out of law school, often to teach at their own schools. But Mary brought a particular expertise to her teaching. She already had a M.A. in English, twelve years’ experience in teaching English (including English as a Second Language), and an ESL textbook to her credit. That cross-disciplinary strength allowed Mary to take an early leadership role in the growing Legal Writing community and to become fast friends with many colleagues who continue to stay in touch with her decades later. She served at length in every organization connected to the teaching of legal writing—the AALS section, the Legal Writing Institute, the Association of Legal Writing Directors, Scribes, the Perspectives editorial board, and several ABA committees.

In spring 1980, I attended my first Legal Writing conference in Louisville, after I had taught Legal Writing for two years at my alma mater. It had been a fast initiation into the ups and downs of teaching Legal Writing, as another faculty member and I had designed a new Legal Writing course from scratch and had, together with the librarians, taught the entire class and graded their assignments. Our student-faculty ratio on the writing assignments was 100 to 1. Until that conference, my only contact with the small community of Legal Writing teachers nationwide was my perusal of the few textbooks that had been published in the field. I was poised to move to my next job that summer, after landing a co-directorship (that also became a tenure-track position) in the Twin Cities.

When I met Mary Lawrence at the AALS Legal Writing conference in Louisville, I would never have guessed that she had been teaching Legal Writing for just a year more than I had. Her assurance and her grasp of the field made her seem far more se-
nior than her recent graduation and three years of law-related experience would indicate. She was already a thoughtful and sought-out speaker at conferences, and she was calmly and steadily building the quality of her program at University of Oregon.

As I encountered her at subsequent conferences, I looked forward to her wry sense of humor and her seasoned grasp of the trickier issues that confront every Legal Writing teacher and director. I also came to appreciate the eagerness with which she set out to explore various conference cities (San Francisco, Washington D.C., Seattle, San Antonio, etc.), finding some great eating spots and enjoying the company of fellow teachers. Before many conferences, she contacted her friends in advance, arranging some legendary dinners and lunches at her favorite places. But it wasn’t food or wine that took front stage. The camaraderie of colleagues eclipsed the food, as impassioned discussions of skills education were laced with the personal stories, building warm friendships on the scaffolding of professional acquaintances. Mary was the catalyst for many of these friendships and so found herself at the hub of many professional networks.

Even her published writings have focused on building and strengthening connections among the Legal Writing community, as she has written reviews of new textbooks, published interviews of Legal Writing colleagues who were instrumental in moving the discipline of Legal Writing ahead, and assembled the historical material to document that growth.

The Mary Lawrence moment that I repeat most often occurred at one of the early conferences of the Legal Writing Institute, then located at University of Puget Sound. Mary’s presentation was focused on debunking the idea that students could learn a skill or concept well in a single encounter. Instead, she said, students will learn a skill or concept much better if they initially encounter it in a simple setting, then spiral past it again and again at increasingly more sophisticated levels, throughout their education. That “spiraling” concept of pedagogy has influenced my teaching design over and over again, as I intentionally re-introduce familiar skills and concepts in new settings, so that students have to spiral over the same material in a new setting, integrating their new-found knowledge with previous lessons learned. And each time I recount this spiraling strategy, I can see Mary beaming at me, saying wryly, “Well, they’ll never learn it well if you teach it just once!”
By Molly Warner Lien
Old Mission Peninsula, Traverse City, Michigan

I first met Mary Lawrence on a beautiful summer day in 1992. She was giving hugs at an LWI meeting in Tacoma, and had more than enough to spare for the large group that had gathered around her. A recent illness had made it difficult for her to speak, but had not diminished the firmness of her handshake, the wisdom of her words, or the warmth of her smile. She was a giant in the legal writing profession, and she loved both the academic discipline and the people who taught it. She became an instant and treasured friend.

Mary radiates generosity. I have met many of her former students over the years, and all tell the story of a woman who, as a teacher, touched their lives. This is not surprising, given that her eyes are always bright, but never so much as when she recounts the accomplishments of one of her own.

She has been generous and more to her professional colleagues. When good things happen, one knows that the first congratulations will come from Mary, always in the form of a beautifully written note on an exquisite card. She is also a steadfast friend in times of indecision, and in times of adversity. She takes her mentor role seriously, and always puts all else aside to concentrate on the problem at hand. When I confided in her in 2008 that I was considering retiring and asked her advice, she called immediately. “Dear Molly,” she said softly, “if you are thinking about going, then you should go. You deserve joyful work, and one isn’t joyful when one is looking longingly at the door. If you need time to think about what will bring you joy, take the time.” (Wise words, Mary.)

Mary cares about us all, and is mother to us all. Every legal writing function has included a lunch or dinner arranged by Mary to get groups of her colleagues together. Her choice of restaurants and menus for these gatherings reflects legendary culinary expertise, but the purpose is more than social. She has single-handedly built a support network for an entire generation of writing professors.

In May 2010, I had the privilege of visiting Mary at her home in Corvallis, Oregon. Both my husband and I came away from the visit inspired. Her home was, of course, welcoming, beautiful,
elegant, and tranquil, but what struck us was how much at home Mary herself seemed there. She also honored us with a visit to her award-winning garden. It can only be described as a holy space that celebrates life, beauty, and the wonders that can be created by a nurturing and patient hand. To see her garden is to understand her teaching.

Dearest Mary, congratulations on all you have done. You are not only a consummate professional, but also the personification of all that is wise, gentle, and kind. Thank you, Mary. With love, Molly Lien.
Over many more years than I can count, Mary has been one of the kindest, warmest, and most generous and caring people I know or anybody can know. She has also had a profound effect on the field of legal writing. Here are a few of her many influences:

About four decades ago, Mary wrote a book for higher education generally called *Writing as a Thinking Process*. At the time, writing was generally considered to be purely a compositional skill focused mostly on style, conciseness, and clarity. And the field of legal writing did not yet exist. Legal writing developed after Mary published this book, and in the field’s first decade or two legal writing teachers lived mostly within the compositional model.

Gradually, a consensus developed among us that writing is a form of thinking as well as a method of expression. But Mary knew that all along. She knew it before most of us were law students, much less teachers. And she gently explained it to us.

At the University of Oregon, Mary built one of the first programs centered on full-time teachers who specialize in legal writing, which is now the nationally predominant model. She was one of the pioneers of this method of teaching, and her sense of program structure was emulated at other schools.

Legal writing teachers are unusually supportive of one another, with a strong sense of community. That culture is one of the deepest characteristics of the field. It reflects Mary’s personality, and through her own example she strongly influenced it.

She also found quiet ways to bring people together, through which bonds grew among them. I don’t know whether that was her goal. But some friendships exist today largely because Mary got people together to enjoy each other’s company.
In an article published in this journal several years ago, Mary Lawrence described legal writing as “unique in academic disciplines.” She wrote, “It is not hierarchical; its members support each others’ careers. It is not parochial; its members strive to improve legal writing instruction nationally. Legal writing is more a community, a family.”

Mary is right. Although in too many schools, the status accorded to legal writing teachers still has not caught up with the value of those teachers to their schools and to the profession of law, we have been sustained by our vibrant, encouraging, smart, warm, honest, and courageous intellectual community. In describing our community, I realize that I am describing Mary Lawrence.

I first came to know Mary in the spring of 1991, when she was serving as chair of the AALS Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research, and I was the section’s program chair. I had no idea what to do. Through our many telephone conversations in the months that followed, Mary welcomed me into the discipline and its professional organizations—and became a dear friend.

Reflecting on my experiences in legal writing since then, I see Mary’s contributions everywhere, apparent—sometimes in ways I didn’t recognize at the time. For one example, I recently came across materials for the AALS Mini-Workshop on Writing throughout the Curriculum, which I attended in 1991. The workshop was the catalyst for my writing in that area over the past fifteen years, but only last fall did I discover—of course—that Mary had been one of the workshop’s organizers.

I am especially grateful to Mary for introducing me to so many treasured colleagues, whom she has likewise supported and inspired, and who cherish her friendship as I do. Her gifts to each of us—her laughter, her wisdom, her thoughtful message at a

personally challenging time—also are her gifts to our community. In law schools throughout the country, legal writing teachers are the people who really talk about teaching and, not coincidentally, the people who bring energy and imagination to the curriculum. Without Mary’s leadership and humanity, without her light touch and wonderful sense of humor, without her welcoming kindness, we could not have become who we are.
Mary Lawrence is a “pillar” of legal writing. Her training in second language learning and her experience and insight as lawyer and teacher are fused into a solid, unbreakable pillar of intellectual and political fortitude. At a time when legal writing was considered remedial and secondary, Mary said, “not so.” She insisted on developing a new field of inquiry, legal writing, and teaching it as an introduction to a new community, the legal discourse community—long before that terminology was invented or in vogue. Alone in the great Northwest, she also insisted on the proper status for teaching this complex and intellectually challenging subject: as a law professor. Among the first to be tenured in this field, with no help from others, she personified what we all hoped to become: full law professors advancing and developing this exciting discipline.

I first met Mary in the summer of 1984 at the first Legal Writing Institute Conference. A second-year instructor at the time, I was leading a focus group on topics of interest to the community. As a trained teacher, I anticipated participants would want to discuss such topics as planning classes, developing good assignments, teaching well in the classroom. Not so. Immediately and insistently, the topics were status and salary. As many know, we developed then and there the first statement on status for legal writing professors and promptly sent it to every dean of every law school. During those discussions, we took a break, and Mary approached me in a stairwell outside the classroom. “Have you thought of directing a legal writing program?” she asked. I was curious. Not only had I not thought of it, but I was also getting increasingly discouraged as our meeting continued. “You would be very good at that,” she said in her quiet, matter-of-fact way. That conversation inspired me to keep going, to pursue legal writing as a career—and to become a director at that.

Mary is almost shy about her immense talents and her passion for teaching. I have seen her do presentations only a few times at our conferences. Each time, the hallmarks of good teaching and thinking are there, subtle but unmistakable: excellent preparation, perfect organization, excellent use of teaching techniques, and practical advice. She exemplifies excellent teaching;
she inspires focused thinking; she promotes practical applications; and she personifies professionalism.

Since our first summer chat, Mary has been mentor, friend, advocate, and cheerer-upper. We talk regularly, and each time her focus is not on her own work, but on mine; not on her own plans, but on mine; not on her own issues, but on mine. Ever the giver, ever the promoter, ever the teacher. How might she respond to such praise? Turning her head slightly to the side, widening her eyes, and looking down, she would probably say, “Well. I don’t know about that.” We do, Mary. We do. Thank you for all you are, all you have been, and all you inspire us to be.
Mary Lawrence caught my attention years before I met her. In 1978, I was a young college teacher, fresh out of graduate school and looking for a textbook to use in my writing course. Mary’s book, *Writing as a Thinking Process*,\(^2\) caught my eye. Here, it seemed, was someone who thought about writing the way I did. For its title alone, the book earned a prominent spot on my office bookshelves, a reminder for me of what lay at the center of teaching writing. I did not know Mary, but always felt that somewhere out in academe lurked a kindred spirit.

Six years later, we met. My professional energies had moved in the direction of legal writing, and as it turned out, so had Mary’s. When, in the spring of 1984, a colleague and I were organizing what became the first conference of the Legal Writing Institute, Mary Lawrence responded, offering to conduct one of the workshops. It was the Mary Lawrence of the book in my office. Mary was teaching at the University of Oregon School of Law by then, and characteristically, she offered her help. When she came to the conference that August, I finally had the privilege not only of meeting Mary, but also of starting a professional association and personal friendship that continues to this day.

Since that summer twenty-four years ago, Mary and I have served together countless times on committees, on boards, and in working groups, and we have been to many, many more conferences together. Throughout all of it, she has been an exemplary colleague. Mary is smart, insightful, pragmatic, and hard-working. I always enjoy serving with her, and I always learn a great deal from her. Mary’s many qualities have made her a leader in the field of legal writing.

\(^2\) Mary S. Lawrence, *Writing as a Thinking Process* (2d ed., U. Mich. Press 1996). The book is still available. I was also impressed because, unlike so many other writing textbooks, this one had a serious publisher—The University of Michigan Press. I should note that although the focus of the book—on writing instruction for ESL students—did not match my own course, I kept it for the inspiration of its title.
But of Mary's many qualities, which others will note, I must underscore her generosity. Perhaps this has to do with her Celtic spirit, or perhaps she just has a larger heart than the rest of us. Mary has given selflessly to those around her, starting, I know, with her students. Regarding her generosity with her professional colleagues, I can speak first-hand. Mary gives more than most, and as a consequence, the profession of legal writing would not be the same without her. She has given generously not only of her energy, her time, and her ideas, but also of her gift for encouraging and advising her colleagues. Many of the accomplishments in the field of legal writing bear Mary's stamp, either directly or through her quiet work behind the scenes. This has been especially true for the Legal Writing Institute. Mary has mentored and guided us, and we are in her debt.

But there is more, because if you work closely with Mary, you find that her professional generosity also comes with the gift of her friendship and her loyalty. In that, she has truly been a special colleague—and a dear friend. I am honored to have known her as both.
Mary Lawrence is a talented, dedicated professional. My one complaint against her is that she did not become a Director of Legal Writing until 1978. That was the year I stopped teaching the subject to first-year law students at the University of Washington Law School. Oh, how I could have used her insights and her creative ideas in my eighteen years of that teaching before 1978! But, I will ever be grateful that she did become a Director, because I had the benefit of those insights and ideas in teaching my Legal Analysis, Research, and Writing course to our foreign graduate students—and I had her friendship.

The professional relationship was important to me. Beginning as early as 1979, we prepared and participated in many panel presentations together. On each occasion, my appreciation of her creative thinking, her dedication, and her stamina grew. She was imperturbable, and I always knew I could rely on her.

Soon after I met her, she faced a challenge that would have put most of us out of action. In the year before Mary was to lead the AALS Legal Reasoning, Writing and Research Section, she lost her voice. Doctors were not immediately helpful in diagnosing the problem. That did not stop her. Wearing a device to enhance and amplify a small voice, she appeared in Louisville in March 1980 to participate in an AALS workshop on “Applied Legal Reasoning: The Research Setting.” Thereafter, she applied herself to learning to speak again, and she continued her contributions to panels and meetings.

Over the years, Mary became a central figure in introducing new teachers to members of the professional organizations. She provided social occasions that enhanced professional and inter-school relationships. On such occasions, she also helped to strengthen bonds among many of the early directors and teachers of Legal Writing programs. And most important to me after I retired, she kept me (and many others, I am sure) updated on developments in the profession.
A Tribute to Mary Lawrence

By Suzanne E. Rowe
University of Oregon School of Law

One of my fondest memories of Mary Lawrence was a time when I couldn’t see her at all. We were attending the 2001 conference of the Association of Legal Writing Directors, and I returned to the conference hotel one afternoon to see a large group of distinguished legal writing professors from around the country clustered in the lobby. As I inched forward to investigate, I realized that Mary Lawrence was at the center of the circle. I couldn’t see her, but I heard her name and I heard her voice. Surrounding her were friends and colleagues, a few of the people she had mentored over the years. They pressed close to get a chance to say hello, share an idea, or relay a personal story to a woman whom they admired like a parent. At that point, I knew better than ever before that Mary is a legend. Beyond what she means to me and beyond what she means to the University of Oregon, Mary is a nationwide legal writing legend.

The program that this legend founded at Oregon thirty years ago was groundbreaking. And through Mary’s never-ending, back-breaking work, the Legal Research and Writing Program at Oregon flourished and achieved wide recognition. With few resources beyond the vision of Dean Chapin Clark and her own creativity, dedication, and tenacity, Mary established at Oregon the beacon on the hill for legal writing. It is no exaggeration to say that Mary and her program helped establish a new discipline in American law schools. I have had the great privilege of building on the foundation she laid, and I have been fortunate in my efforts to have had the support of many people at Oregon and nationwide. Among my fondest hopes is that Mary will continue to be proud of her program and that she will appreciate the care with which we have nurtured her legacy.
We all know that Mary is a pioneer in our field in so many ways, and I am sure that the other testimonials in these tributes will recount her endless efforts at mentoring and making the legal writing world a better place to make a living. I doubt that I would be able to add much of significance to what will undoubtedly be more profound thoughts than mine, so I chose to focus on Mary the person, and especially on aspects of her personality that may not come up as much in the other tributes.

"Life is too short to be so polite."

Many would be surprised that the above statement came from the revered Mary Lawrence. But this is the Mary I know and am so inordinately fond of. She said this to me at one of the many collegial group meals she organizes at legal writing conferences. It is always an honor to be invited to meals with Mary, but I think sometimes people treat it as a more formal occasion than she intends it to be.

Mary is always eager to celebrate the accomplishments and honors of others, as well as the many friendships she has accumulated through the years. She is generous to a fault, always insisting on paying the entire tab, no matter how many people she has gathered. (I think she did let me share the bill once.) She is just a gracious and gentle soul, which I think everyone knows, but it is that other, slyly humorous side of her that surprises and delights.

As many people know, I have a bad (or entertaining, depending on your point of view) habit of playing with my food and trying to find artistic things to do with it. At one AALS meeting, at a LexisNexis authors’ dinner at Mardi Gras World in New Orleans, I sat with Mary and at some point started doing my food art thing. Mary not only watched and wondered as many do, she was very helpful and made significant contributions to the finished work (smile). At other subsequent gatherings, she would ask if we could sit together to create more artwork.

I tell this story to demonstrate again that Mary is a wonderfully playful individual. I love the mischievous twinkle in her eye
when she says or hears something funny. She has a dry, intelligent wit, and loves to laugh.

Mary once told me that I was a “joyful person who makes others happy; at least that’s the effect you have on me.” This is one of the nicest things anyone has ever said to me and wonderful if true. It would thrill me to have that effect on someone who inspires so many, through what she has accomplished and especially through her personal courage and grace in dealing with the adversity life has thrown at her.

I am so pleased to be her friend, and wish only that we could manage to find more time to spend together.
One of my favorite movies is “My Dinner with Andre,” in which Wallace Shawn and Andre Gregory, two figures in the New York theater world, talk over dinner for two straight hours. Their topics of discussion range from the value of the scientific method to the state of western civilization. The discussion is fascinating, although I must admit that I have difficulty staying awake throughout their entire dinner. But I never doze off when I have dinner with Mary Lawrence. Those dinners are too much fun.

Although we never talk about the cosmic issues that seem to plague Wally and Andre, we enjoy our common-sense talks about the practicalities of Legal Writing and whatever comes to mind. Of course, Mary selects only great restaurants with the best food; she prizes quality. More importantly, she selects the best company. She presides over meals with the most interesting and enjoyable people. Her dinners have permitted me to create and cement friendships with people I like and admire. At her table, there are no long silences or tedious debates, but plenty of talk and lots of good humor.

In reviewing “My Dinner with Andre,” critic Roger Ebert wrote, “I think I made a lot of notes about Andre’s theories and Wally’s doubts, but this is not a logical process. It is a conversation in which the real subject is the tone, the mood, the energy.” This description also fits my dinners with Mary.

As with the conversation in the movie, Mary’s relationships with people have a special tone, mood, and energy. Mary’s style tells us much about her influence in the Legal Writing world. As with her meals, she insists on quality in pedagogy. Teachers should think carefully about how they teach, and students should devote themselves to their work. More importantly, just as she cares about her dinner guests, she cares about her professional colleagues. She is always sensitive to their needs and well being. Her warmth and fondness for people always shines through.

I cannot remember when I first met Mary. In my memory, she has always been there. Knowing Mary has been a continuing feast.
Mary Lawrence is my dear friend. We have been friends now for more than thirty years, overcoming the restrictions that geography has imposed. We both began teaching legal writing in 1978, and we were then very new directors of legal writing programs. Since then, we have shared the frustrations, the difficult decisions, the disappointments of our professional careers and our personal lives, as well as our successes and joys. During the early years of our teaching, the AALS section was the only professional organization and the only source of a newsletter for legal writing teachers, and Mary and I worked together on many programs and newsletters. In fact, one of the newsletters that Mary put together as section secretary was so long (and full of important information) that the AALS imposed a page limit on future issues for all sections.

Mary very early had a well-developed concept of a first-year course that integrated writing, analysis, and research, and she generously shared her ideas with others. I still have the copy that she sent me of her massive, meticulously constructed course materials dated 1984. They are breathtaking in their inclusiveness, their level of detail, their perfectly thought-through explanations and assignments, their examples and exercises, and their flow charts and diagrams, and they are accompanied by thoughtfully constructed instructor’s manuals. Mary used what she called a spiraling process: her materials progress step-by-step from simple steps in which she introduced novices (our beginning law students) to the world of law and legal communication, and they add a new complexity at each step. She provided review questions along the way until her students became rather sophisticated legal writers. She emphasized a process approach before most of the rest of us grasped its meaning. She emphasized self-editing, careful reading, and relationships among materials, for example, research materials.

Besides benefitting professionally from our association, I have profited from Mary’s friendship. We have gone to many meetings together. We shared early morning breakfasts. We took walks when we had free time between sessions. Mary graciously learned to deal with the fact that I have no sense of direction.
whatsoever. We enjoyed lovely dinners, usually with a group of friends that Mary had organized. We keep in touch by telephone as often as possible.

We in the legal writing field have become an extended family. We now have organizations in addition to the AALS section, and several journals and newsletters. As the field has grown, with many new relationships being developed, Mary continues to be an essential member of that family. She keeps in touch with a number of people, and continues to play an important role. Someone recently described her to me as “beloved.” She has been so especially to me. I can’t imagine what these years would have been like without her encouragement and friendship.
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. 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.
I cannot claim the status of “colleague” of Mary Lawrence. During the time I have known Mary (more than twenty years), I have not held an academic position of any sort. Nevertheless, I hold fiercely to my status as a friend and comrade-in-arms.

I met Mary in the mid 1980s, at one of the early biennial conferences of the Legal Writing Institute, then held at the University of Puget Sound. I knew little about the legal writing community at that time, but I quickly learned of Mary’s stature as one of the pioneering advocates, a Founding Mother, of an ongoing drive for clearer communication in law and, indeed, in all fields where written work remains, all too often, opaque. You could hardly participate in (or eavesdrop on) a conversation at LWI without hearing a reference to Mary: “You should talk with Mary Lawrence about that”; “Well, here’s what Mary said”; or some other similarly estimable reference. Upon meeting Mary, I understood immediately the deep affection and admiration the then-small corps of legal writing teachers held for her.

Over the years, I have had the pleasure of many conversations with Mary—conversations always enjoyable and enlightening because of Mary’s intelligence, thoughtfulness, experience, and generosity of spirit. In those conversations, one thing always came through without qualification: her dedication to making the world increasingly inhospitable to crummy legal writing. We would discuss seemingly intractable obstacles to improving the quality of legal writing, brainstorm ideas for ways to eliminate (or at least circumvent) those obstacles, and ponder examples of writers’ and teachers’ “light bulb” moments for the deeper lessons those moments might hold for others. Throughout, she maintained an unrelenting focus on the goal of sending law students into the world with the strongest possible foundation of the communications skills essential to high-quality lawyering and advocacy. In the end, the magic of Mary lies in the unassuming, gentle manner by which she inexorably draws others into her commitment—indeed, her crusade—to raise the legal writing stan-
standards of not just law students, but of those who teach those students and of those of us whose day-to-day employment keeps us scribbling madly on behalf of clients and for the benefit of courts. As a beneficiary of that magic, I happily claim the title of “disciple,” even if I cannot claim the title of “colleague.”