



Hal Lewis

ers — to brief the new lawyers coming onto the case about what had gone on in the several years preceding the litigation,” Lewis said.

In 1977 at a national recruiting conference for law professors in Chicago, Lewis first met faculty from Mercer. “I was extremely impressed with the group who worked at the Mercer Law School and their obvious commitment to teaching,” Lewis said.

Lewis remained at Mercer from 1977-1989, moving up from assistant professor to full professor in 1983. In the late 1980s he was involved in the planning of the Woodruff Curriculum.

In 1989 Lewis took a position as professor at Fordham University School of Law in New York City, but decided to return to Mercer in 1991. Part of his decision to return was based on the schools’ differences.

“I enjoy teaching at a school that is relatively small and where you get to know students and faculty — where the energies of the people who work at the school are heavily concentrated on the school rather than on outside activities. I’m delighted to be back at Mercer,” Lewis said.

Lewis thinks there’s little question that on average Mercer students are better prepared for law study and more capable than at any time in his experience. And with the implementation of the Woodruff Curriculum, Mercer students are better prepared for the practice of law when they graduate.

Both the school and its students are viewed extremely well by others, said Lewis. “One of the things we’ve been hearing increasingly during the last several years, particularly from lawyers in the metro Atlanta area, is that Mercer graduates perform best on the ground, in the actual field of practice. Many of those lawyers express a preference for Mercer graduates over those from other law schools, and that’s something that pleases us enormously.”

Lewis’ scholarship is focused primarily on civil procedure, civil rights law and employment discrimination. He is currently nearing completion of a two-

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ercer School of Law’s namesake, Walter F. George, was often referred to as a great teacher, and that, says Harold Lewis, is what makes being the Walter F. George Professor of Law so meaningful.

By Roban Johnson

“I have looked at tributes to Senator George and one in particular stands out,” said Lewis. “In a 1959 volume of the Georgia Reports Senator Talmadge referred to Senator George as a great teacher. Even as a senator, George was somewhat detached from the purely partisan politics of the age and was open to all kinds of different points of view. To have a job that is associated with Senator George’s name is a reminder of the important attributes of being a good teacher.”

While teaching has been Lewis’ vocation for the past 18 years, he practiced for five years as an attorney after graduating from Stanford University School of Law in 1972. Employed by a large New York firm, Lewis’ practice focused on labor law and commercial litigation. It was at this firm that Lewis had his first taste of teaching.

“I ended up on a very large lawsuit with a team of lawyers. The lawyers were continually being replaced, so those of us who had been on the case for a long time were assigned, in effect, to be teach-

Following in Footsteps of a Great Teacher

volume treatise and a related student hornbook on civil rights and employment discrimination law, which are scheduled for publication in late spring by West Publishing Co. Each year he participates as counsel or consultant in one or two legal matters related to his areas of teaching.

For Lewis, teaching, researching, and exposure to practice have gone hand-in-hand. This past semester in his civil procedure class he was able to use as teaching material documents from a pending lawsuit, and will be able to do more of that next year as the lawsuit unfolds. In addition, as he prepares for class and reads student papers, unsettled questions are presented that provide leads for research and writing. And papers by

students in a civil rights class last year formed the basis of selected portions of his forthcoming books.

"Sometimes it sounds like an abstraction to say that writing and teaching are mutually reinforcing, but for me, it's really been the case that teaching and professional practice have all been rich sources of inspiration," Lewis said.

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