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Remembering Paul Jordan: Law School Dean 1943-1961

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REMEMBERING PAUL JORDAN
LAW SCHOOL DEAN 1943 TO 1961

by Dean Peter G. Keane

In his self-published autobiography, *Recollections of an Old Lawyer*, Paul Jordan wrote, "I first saw the light of day in a farmhouse close to the village of Severy, Kansas, at 11:30 a.m. on March 31, 1903." Paul died on January 6 of this year, just several weeks before his 98th birthday.

As I write about Paul, I realize it is fitting that 2001 is the 100th anniversary of Golden Gate University School of Law. He was a big part of that first century. Just about all of the Law School's attributes can be traced, in one way or another, to Paul Jordan. While teaching and serving as dean of the Law School, he also kept up a full-time law practice and developed one of the most respected law firms in San Francisco. He was a practicing lawyer in this town for 66 years, and he stands out as a landmark of the city's legal history.

I first met Paul shortly after I became dean in January 1999. He was living in a retirement home on Sutter Street



Photo taken (in July 1998) of the living Deans of Golden Gate University School of Law. Back row, left to right: Lani Bader (dean, 1969-74), Jack Wilson (dean, 1982-88), Tony Pagano (dean, 1988-98). Front row: Paul Jordan (dean, 1943-60), Judy McKelvey (dean, 1974-81)

where I went to visit him (together with former deans Judy McKelvey, Lani Bader, and Tony Pagano). I had heard quite a bit about Paul long before I became dean. Actually, Paul, Judy, and I share something else in addition to our great pride in being law school deans at Golden Gate University. The three of us are also former presidents of the Bar Association of San Francisco. When I was president in 1988-89, the accounts of Paul's presidency in 1960 were legendary. So my first visit with Paul, for a lunch of Rueben sandwiches in the dining hall of his residency, was a great treat. I went to see Paul several times during my first two years as dean. Each time, he regaled me with stories of the school and of his long legal career.

Paul started practicing law in 1927, the year that the State Bar of California began operating. Today, someone admitted to practice law in California receives a State Bar card with a number up around 190,000. Paul's number was 981. During the very depths of the Great Depression, he rented an office on the tenth floor of the Russ Building. Times were so tough that many of the premier downtown office buildings stood vacant, or almost vacant, and Paul was the only tenant on his floor. But he turned out to be a landlord's dream tenant, since he practiced law from that same suite of offices for 62 years, until his retirement in 1993.

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In the late 1930s, two enterprising young characters from down the Peninsula named Bill Hewlett and David Packard came to see Paul. . . . they wanted to incorporate. Paul incorporated Hewlett-Packard but . . . he insisted that he get \$50 in greenbacks, rather than take several hundred shares of stock from these two kids from the sticks.

and David Packard) from down the Peninsula came to see Paul. They had been working on a number of inventions in a garage in Palo Alto, and they wanted to incorporate. Paul incorporated Hewlett-Packard but, as he told me during our first visit, he passed on their suggested method of payment.

"You see," Paul said, "these young guys had very little money and they offered to pay me in stock. But I was a shrewd big city lawyer who knew that the first rule of surviving in practice was to get the fee up front in cash." So Paul

insisted that he get \$50 in greenbacks, rather than take several hundred shares of stock from these two kids from the sticks.

The two enterprising youngsters came to see him again a couple of years later. The company was developing with middling success, and they asked Paul if he would come to work for them. They had plans to expand and needed a house counsel to develop a legal department for them. This was shortly before World War II, which was to turn Hewlett-Packard into a behemoth and both of them into billionaires. Once again, Paul told me, chuckling at himself, he was too smart to get sucked into some deal like that. His law firm was developing nicely, and he was clearing about \$100 a week after expenses. No way was he going to pull up stakes from the sophisticated world of Montgomery Street and move all the way down to sleepy Palo Alto.

Paul's eyes would twinkle with delight as he told these stories about himself, and he used to break into laughter about how either one of these passed-up opportunities would have made him fabulously wealthy. But he also insisted—and I believe him—that he had no regrets. He had a wonderfully rich, vibrant professional and personal life as a San Francisco legal icon, and he would have missed all of that had he opted for a life of opulence among the Peninsula horsy set.

Paul's relationship with the Law School began in 1933. *The Recorder* newspaper was the city's legal publication, and as he browsed through it one morning, he spotted an ad.

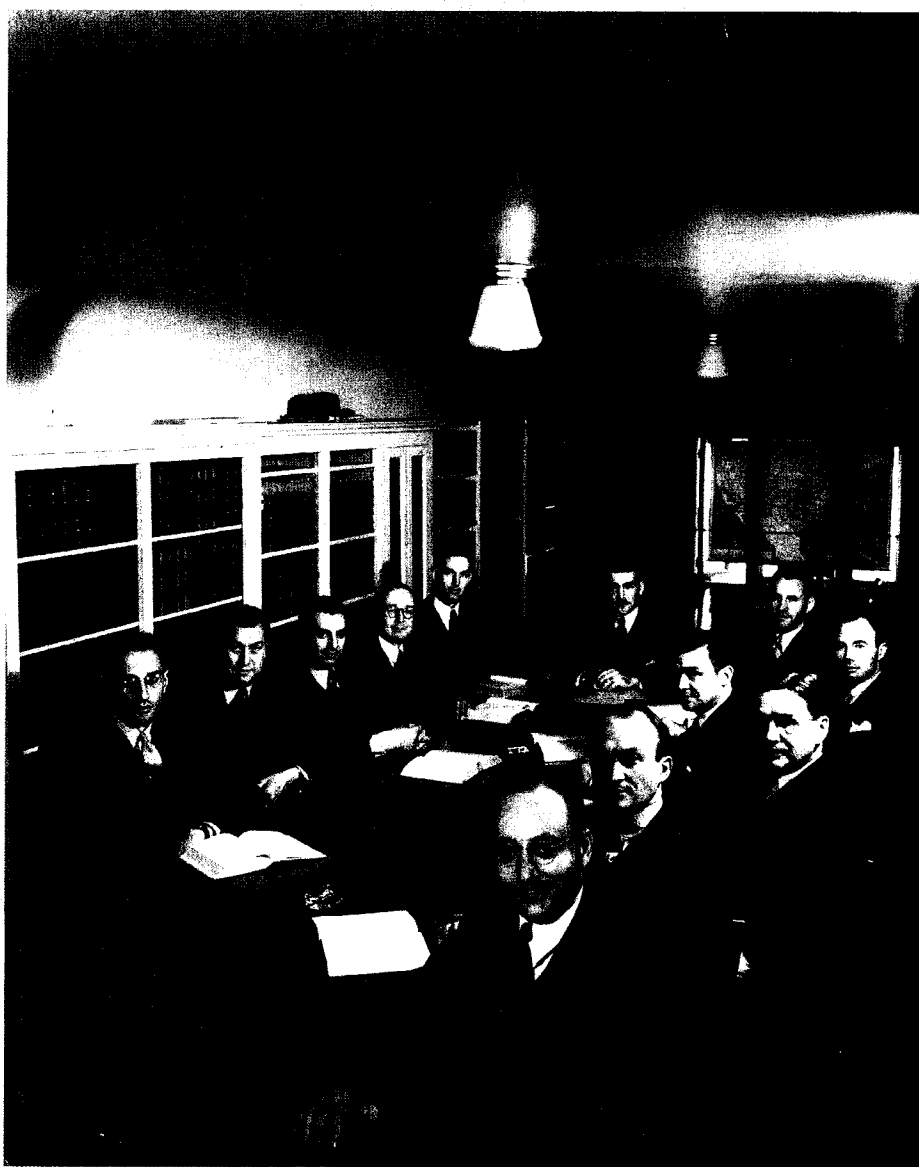
Wanted: Attorney to teach classes in part-time evening law school. Apply for interview at Golden Gate College, 220 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, California.

He started teaching at night, along with all of the other faculty members who were themselves full-time practicing lawyers. Classes were held in the San Francisco YMCA, just underneath the gymnasium. The students got their ration of torts, contracts, and remedies to the cadence of dribbling basketballs, rat-a-tats of punching bags, and teeth-jarring clangs of dropped weights on the floor above.

I asked Paul what he got paid to teach at Golden Gate, and he told me it was \$5 per night. He added that in Depression-era 1933, \$5 was pretty good money at the time. "There were a lot of days I didn't make five bucks practicing law," he explained.

Paul Jordan served as dean of Golden Gate University School of Law from 1944 to 1960. He shepherded the school from a tiny night law school, through its expansion with returning World War II veterans who came flooding in under the G.I. Bill, right up through provisional accreditation by the ABA.

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The Law School faculty in 1941. Paul Jordan is seated on the far right of the photo. (His white handkerchief is in his jacket pocket.)

After Paul stepped down as dean in 1961, he continued his association by becoming a trustee of the university. He worked hard to advance the school throughout the 40 years after he left teaching and administration. He became a life trustee of the university and gave generously of his time and finances to help it thrive. In 1993, Golden Gate University gave Paul Jordan The Amicus Award for his contributions to the school, and the Paul S. Jordan Endowed Scholarship was founded.

During my visits with Paul over the two years before his death, he always grilled me thoroughly on numbers of students, bar-pass rates, new LL.M. offerings, and more. Each time I left, Paul shook my hand and then handed me a check made out in a good amount to the Law School. In his will, he left the school a substantial sum to be used for scholarships.

All of us owe so much to Paul. He represented all that is best about a lawyer and a person. I will never forget

him and I know that there are several generations of lawyers in San Francisco, around the state, and throughout the country who think fondly of him.

If you would like to do something that would please Paul, celebrate his memory with a donation to the Paul S. Jordan Scholarship Fund. ☐