

Fordham Law Mourns the Loss of Professor Joseph Conrad Sweeney

Sweeney, a Faculty Member for Nearly 50 Years, Co-founded the Fordham International Law Journal

The Fordham Law community is mourning the passing of Professor Joseph C. Sweeney, the John D. Calamari Distinguished Professor of Law Emeritus. Sweeney was a member of the Fordham Law faculty for 47 years—from 1966 until his retirement in 2013. He was also the founding faculty advisor to the *Fordham International Law Journal (FILJ)* and remained in that role for 36 years. He died on July 21 at the age of 87.

“Joe had an encyclopedic knowledge of the law. He was a leading expert on maritime law specifically, which grew out of his career in the Navy JAG Corps, but he had a deep love for the law overall and legal history and an insatiable curiosity. He was a kind, warm, and generous teacher who was beloved by so many,” said Dean Matthew Diller. “As an engaged, brilliant scholar, Joe continued to write and make a significant scholarly impact long after he retired. We grieve with his family and send our deepest condolences to his devoted wife, Alice.”

“The things about Joe that first come to mind were his gentle (and gentlemanly) manner, his care and concern for his students, his enthusiasm for all things maritime, and his vast knowledge of American history—no matter the current issue under discussion,” remembered former Dean and Distinguished Professor of Law Michael M. Martin. “He always had a historical reference that was apropos. I will miss him.”

Sweeney joined Fordham Law School as a professor of law in the fall of 1966 and helped found the *FILJ* a decade later with the late Professor Ludwik Teclaff. “The journal was something that was overdue back in 1977. I’d tried to encourage it in previous years, but it just didn’t catch on until some zealots—some eight students—decided to do it,” Sweeney **said** prior to his retirement in 2013. The *FILJ* remains one of the most-read international law periodicals in the world and is one of the most frequently cited student-edited legal publications dedicated to the study of international law. The *FILJ* office was named in honor of Sweeney when the new Law School building was completed in 2014 on the Lincoln Center campus.

During his 47 years as a professor, Sweeney taught a number of courses at Fordham Law, including International Business Transactions, International Conflict Dispute Resolution, History of the Supreme Court, Torts, and Admiralty. He also taught students through the Fordham summer program in Ireland in the program’s first five years. He served under five Fordham presidents and five Law School deans, and he taught approximately 15,000 students during his time on the faculty. Sweeney was also the author of a number of books, including *The Law of Marine Collision*, with Nicholas Healy, and *The Life and Times of Arthur Browne in Ireland and America 1756-1805*. He was also the co-author of *Aviation Law: Cases, Law, and Related Sources*.

“Joe was more than a teacher, legal scholar, and mentor; he was my predecessor in the admiralty course that he created and taught for more than 40 years. He had a vast range of knowledge and interests and was a student of many subjects: international law, Supreme Court history, aviation law, wine, language, history, politics, and even theology,” **said Adjunct Professor Lawrence B. Brennan**, captain, Judge Advocate General’s (JAG) Corps, U.S. Naval Reserve (retired). “Generations of Fordham Law students owe much of their professional success to the knowledge and skills instilled by Joe Sweeney. We are sad momentarily for our loss, but are eternally richer and happier for the contributions Joe has made to so many facets of our lives.”

Prior to becoming part of the Fordham Law family, Sweeney joined the U.S. Naval Reserve and became a JAG officer in 1957. He served on the legal staff of the Destroyer Force of the Atlantic Fleet at Newport, principally working as counsel to formal investigations of collisions, groundings, fires, and explosions. Sweeney was later selected to be an instructor at the Naval Justice School where he taught Criminal Procedure, Evidence, Administrative Law, and Substantive Criminal Law. Leaving active duty in June 1962, he practiced law part-time at Haight, Gardner, Poor & Havens and later worked as a full-time associate for the firm from 1963 to 1966.

In 1970, Sweeney assisted the late Ambassador Richard D. Kearney on answers from the Department of State to questionnaires from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). This work was the beginning of his apprenticeship as a diplomat over the next 25 years, representing the United States at three diplomatic conferences: U.N. Conference on Carriage of Goods by Sea (Hamburg, 1978); Special Drawing Right (SDR) Protocol to the Hague Rules (Brussels, 1979); and U.N. Diplomatic Conference on Liability of Terminal Operators in International Trade (Vienna, 1991). Sweeney also spent eight years negotiating and drafting the 1978 Hamburg Rules, which 33 nations ratified or acceded to. He was the visiting E.S. Land Professor of Maritime Affairs at Naval War College in 1972 and a distinguished visiting professor at U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in 1982.

Sweeney grew up in Boston and attended Boston Latin School. He graduated from Harvard University in 1954. He earned a J.D. from Boston University in 1957 and an LL.M. in international law from Columbia University in 1963.

Funeral arrangements have not yet been announced, but will be shared with the Fordham Law community once available. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations in Professor Joe Sweeney's memory be made to the Fordham Law School annual fund. law.fordham.edu/JosephSweeney

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