

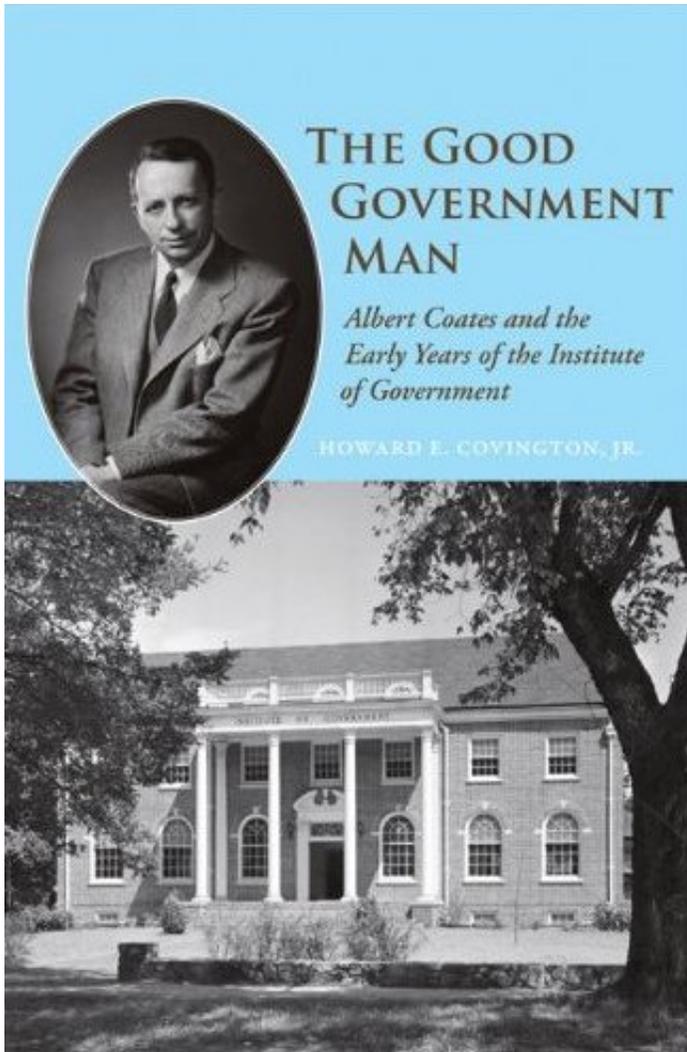


Happy New Year!

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This time of year encourages reflections and resolutions. I find myself thinking about how fortunate I have been to be connected with an institution that matters and with people who care deeply about their work and each other.

I clerked at the Institute of Government after my second year of law school. My research project for Joe Ferrell involved jurisdiction to tax tangible personal property. Property and tax law each



would have been near the bottom of my list of interests, and initially I was disappointed when my assignment involved both of them. I had hoped for a criminal law project involving search and seizure. Joe was great and the assignment turned out to be fascinating. I loved the work, but that summer I really came to love the idea of the Institute.

I learned about the mission of the Institute, its values and traditions, and especially the importance of its place in North Carolina. I learned it from Joe and others who talked about the mission, and who consistently demonstrated their commitment to the mission in what they did and how they did it. I learned it from staff members who were dedicated to doing whatever was necessary to meet the needs of public officials. There was a spirit about the place that was contagious and it captured my imagination.

I was lucky enough to join the faculty and, unaccountably, to become Director of the Institute in 1992. We have added new fields of work over the years, and how we do the work has changed in some ways. But the mission is identical to the one I learned about in 1978, and your collective dedication to that mission is stronger than ever. The spirit of the place is alive and well. Albert Coates would recognize his vision for the Institute in all of our work, though he might be puzzled momentarily by things like webinars. He would love it all.

Over the years I have heard senior colleagues occasionally wonder whether the next generation will be as firmly committed to the School's mission. It seems to me an inevitable part of human nature to wonder if the people who come after you are as committed as your generation. That is especially true if they make different choices about how to do the work.

I am absolutely certain that my current colleagues?faculty and professional staff?are as dedicated to the School's mission as my former colleagues. You sometimes have made different choices about how to work in a field that has been defined by a legendary former colleague, and in each case it has been an improvement. You work as hard and you regularly seek new ways to respond to the needs of North Carolina's officials. Those officials continue to prize your assistance and they are grateful for your innovations.

The following is a testimonial that supports my point. It was included as a comment on Jeff Welty's blog, and it rightly praises Jeff for his creative and helpful work. It also applies perfectly to everyone else who works at the School today. Many thanks to all of you for your continued dedication to our work for North Carolina. As we begin another new year, I feel privileged to be connected with such a wonderful group of professionals.

Hi Jeff,

Take it from an old hand, the Blog is a fantastic practice tool, and gives Old Albert's dream of reaching those without the means or time to keep up with the law, a large turbocharge!



I was one of his last hires, after surviving the grading system in his last Criminal Law class. He was kind enough to mention my experience in the Greensboro Police Department (as an IOG local government intern) to John Sanders, who ultimately took a chance on me, tucked me under Dexter Watts' and Ben Loeb's wings, and let me teach in the SHP Basic, Wildlife Basic, and other law enforcement education programs to earn my way through UNC Law School, graduating in 1970.

That was so long ago that Bob Farb was probably in about the third grade!

There were no computers of course, and copy machines were more likely of the mimeograph style than not. The basement wing of the IOG reaching out towards the brand-new law school consisted of dorm rooms with connecting bathrooms, where more than one set of night-managers were caught frolicking with female students in the Drivers License Examiners Schools, to Marjorie Bounds great distress, usually resolved by Mr. Sanders' unique ability to buffer any brand of indigestion, no matter the source.

I shared one of those offices, Number 010, looking out onto the parking lot from the ground level, with a fellow named Don Stephens, in number 011, who has done ok for himself as a Wake County Superior Court Judge. (Hi Don, your Grace.)

They moved Dexter down onto our hall from somewhere up on the second level near Don Hayman. Took an hour to move him and his desk; took two weeks to sort out and move the stacks and stacks of all kinds of papers Dexter was famous for.

We went on the road, as I recall, in the Spring of 1972, to explain to law enforcement and judicial officials, (in those days prosecutors and judges thought they were on the same side, so we did not have separate sessions for them, and of course none at all for criminal defense bar), (wink!), to explain the brand new Controlled Substances Act. We held six sessions around the State, where the hardest questions were about why pot was in a separate schedule. Most of those folks thought pot was for hippies, or blacks, and that they (not it) did not deserve special misdemeanor status, but ought always to be treated as felons. Remember, Texas was still giving folks twenty years for less than an ounce! Later they decided to divide things up into separate conferences for DA's and Superior Court Judges, and I was privileged to work for both, and even to suggest expanded services to indigent services lawyers and later, when they came along, to the new "Public Defenders." Wonderfully, your blog incorporates them all today, as they should be, each an integral part of the Justice system.

But oh, the older I get, the more I seem to digress.

What I wanted to say is that it is awfully hard for you present day faculty men and women to appreciate how really wonderful this site is, without being reminded by some of us really old codgers about where we came from. It is almost like comparing Old Albert's Franklin Street "hole in the ground" with today's modern SOG facility.



Anyway, keep up the wonderful work, and circulate this message if you will, to other SOG Bloggers there, as testament that your modern efforts continue the wonderful tradition of benefits begun in Mr. Coates' imagination at Harvard, and continued by your predecessors, who remain proud of the way you all are serving that tradition.

Finally, rather than take a poll on pleaded or pled, pick up the phone and call Margaret Taylor, whose word was and will always be, for me, final on such matters. (She is a resident at Carol Woods.)

With my kindest regards to you all,

*Bob Epting
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