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Decanal Haiku

Nancy B. Rapoport

University of Nevada, Las Vegas – William S. Boyd School of Law

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Recommended Citation

Rapoport, Nancy B., "Decanal Haiku" (2005). *Scholarly Works*. 112.

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DECANAL HAIKU*

*Nancy B. Rapoport***

PAPERS, meetings, calls.
Symbolic face-time needed.
All in a day's work.

Breakfast, lunch, dinner.
Donors, alumni—always
working on gifts.

New professorships—
more than before, but too few
for all to have. Help!

Why is it that a
faculty member can think
deans have no feelings?

“How do you have time
to do everything you do?”
“Nothing gets done well.”

My mom is gone. The
job goes on. So much to do.
I move so slowly.

Spouse is not “First Guy,”
as he'd be the first to say.
But he is crucial.

Only “luggage.” Not
the dean. Not important. So
just shake hands and smile.¹

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** Dean and Professor of Law, University of Houston Law Center. Obviously, the haiku represents my views (and lack of literary talent) alone. I want to thank my dad, Morris Rapoport, and my husband, Jeff Van Niel, for vetting earlier drafts. Jeff wrote and edited some of these haiku as well. Because my mom was truly an exquisite writer, I'm dedicating the haiku to Mom.

1. Written by Jeff Van Niel.

Work comes home each night.
Never time to do it all.
Less cuddling time now.

Deans get respect from
Alums and lawyers in town.
I love those events.

Too much of the day
devoted to signing forms
no one ever reads.

Meetings back to back.
Fifteen-minute blocks all day.
No time for real work.

Heisenberg was right.
Look for the dean inside, and
she's out; vice-versa.

"You travel too much
to know us as professors."
"Now, get us money!"

Deaning: so subtle,
it looks like anyone could
do it. Oh, really?

Faculty colleagues
who can do it all, and well:
Precious as rubies.

Herding cats? Oh, no.
Deaning is more like cooking—
balancing the tastes.

Professors have no
boss, but deans have many, with
contradicting goals.

Bricks and sticks are hard
to fundraise, but without them,
it's hard to stay dry.

For deans who wonder
why they stay, the question is,
"will I leave a mark?"

I'd do it again
in a heartbeat. On balance,
it's worth all the stress.

