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Accent on Youth: Sheldon Richman

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If, as seems inevitable, Americans are going to be coping with the intricacies of taxation for a long time into the future, somewhere in the thickets of tax law and regulation Sheldon Richman of the Los Angeles Office will doubtless be found marking out paths for Haskins & Sells clients.

The youngest of 23 new partners admitted to membership in the Firm this year, Shel, now 32, has concentrated on tax work for the past seven of his twelve years with H&S. And he is devoted to his chosen specialty with the zeal of an aficionado. "I count time from 1961," he says, "when taxation became my full-time business."

A native Angeleno, Shel Richman went through the Los Angeles public school system and graduated from Fairfax High School in the Hollywood section of the city in 1953. Although his father is an accountant, the new H&S partner admits that even with searching hindsight he cannot say that his parent decisively influenced him toward public accounting as a career. Perhaps, he adds on reflection, it was simply a matter of learning at home that there is such a profession as public accounting, as well as medicine, law, engineering and the others.

Entering the University of California at Los Angeles as a pre-business student, Shel picked up momentum under a heavier-than-average course load, a summer quarter of study instead of vacation, a switch to the Berkeley campus for a year, and then back again to UCLA. He graduated with the B.S. degree Phi Beta Kappa in 1956 and joined H&S in June of that year. Five months later he brought honor to the Los Angeles Office by winning the

John Forbes Award for the highest grades in California on the November 1956 CPA examination. A few weeks after the exam, on New Year's Day 1957, Shel turned twenty-one.

When asked why he was in such a hurry in those formative years, Shel answered the question with his own query: "Why is anyone in a hurry?" It was as if a work-oriented man believes that such a question answers itself—we all have jobs to do, and the quicker we get them done, the sooner we can move on to something else.

Shel Richman did so shortly after passing the CPA examination. In 1957 while still a junior accountant at H&S he started evening law courses at the University of Southern California. After a four-year stint of five nights of law classes a week, on top of his regular staff work in the Los Angeles Office, he received his LL.B. degree in 1961, passed the qualifying examination and was admitted to the California bar.

Meanwhile, in 1958 Shel married Judy Gaynor, formerly of Detroit, whom he had met at a party. Their eldest son, Steven, was born just after Shel was promoted to senior accountant in 1960. Gary, now six, Lori, approaching four, and Paul, not yet two, round out the Richman family group. The two older boys were on the scene when Shel and Judy moved to Hacienda Heights, a residential community due east of the downtown H&S office.

Away from his Haskins & Sells work, Shel admits to being a putter-around gardener without pretending to love the soil, an enthusiastic softball player but a mediocre golfer, and a bridge player whose wife has one more master point than he does. (Judy has one.)

In his own neighborhood, Shel has served as a director and as president of his civic association.

For a number of years he lectured on tax accounting at East Los Angeles College. He enjoyed teaching, Shel says, because he was stimulated by "good students who would fight back at me." This past summer he served as an instructor at the H&S course for new tax specialists held at the University of Illinois (see p. 30), and he was impressed by the calibre of the group. Shel has also found time to be active in the Los Angeles chapter of the state CPA society, serving on the real estate and taxation committees. He has contributed articles on taxation to the *Journal of Accountancy*, the *Arizona Law Review* and the *Journal of Taxation*.

Taxation of international transactions is the aspect of the work that intrigues Shel Richman the most, and he believes that the Firm and the public accounting profession as a whole have much to gain here. "This is a side of our work that is going to grow rapidly," he says. "We are playing tax counselor both in the United States and all over the world. The amount of tax work that we can do is almost limitless."

What is the particular appeal of this specialty? For Shel Richman it seems to be taking on a problem that is unsolved so far and going at it, as he puts it, "creatively.—I guess the biggest satisfaction comes from having solved a client problem. You have a sense of accomplishment that you've done more than just complete an assignment."

Then, after a reflective pause: "The field of taxation offers the intellect a good workout." □