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TRIBUTES

HARRY FLECHTNER: TEACHER, SCHOLAR AND FRIEND

Mark A. Nordenberg



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*Mark A. Nordenberg**

Harry Flechtner once said that my signature was on all of the most important documents from his professional life—and that may be almost true. I chaired the faculty recruitment committee when Harry was hired. I was Interim Dean of the School of Law when his first contract was renewed. I was Dean when he was tenured and Interim Provost when he was promoted to full Professor. I also was Chancellor when he received the Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award—though I had nothing to do with the selection process. And that is just the professional side of our relationship.

For many years, our homes were just a block apart, so I would catch an early morning bus into campus and then ride home with Harry, which let us end most work-days in conversation with each other. Our wives walked together for exercise each day. Our youngest child, a son, and the Flechtner’s older child, a daughter, went from pre-school through high school together. When she married, our son was her “man of honor.” Years later, when Harry and Joan decided to renew their own wedding vows before retiring and moving to Maine, they had this same son officiate at an otherwise family-only ceremony—where, I understand, many tears of joy were shed.

So what do I know about Harry, based on our long, multi-dimensional, relationship?

First, from the very start, Harry had a truly exceptional touch as a scholar. The external reviews that we received of his first articles almost boiled down to this: I wish I had written that! Harry has built on that early

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foundation of excellence to produce works of impact in domestic and international commercial law.

Since we all are judged by the company we keep, another sign of the quality of his work came when John Murray—the Dean when both Harry and I joined the faculty, later the President of Duquesne University and a prolific scholar throughout his career—invited Harry to co-author a casebook on *Sales, Leases and Electronic Commerce* with him. Harry also assumed responsibility for the fourth edition of *Uniform Law for International Sales under the 1980 United Nations Convention*, which originally had been written by John Honnold of the University of Pennsylvania, a true giant in the field.

Second, Harry also is a deeply committed and extraordinarily accomplished teacher. One evening some thirty-five years ago, he called me to talk about the first of his classes to be peer-reviewed by a colleague, whose assessment was not as positive as Harry would have liked. Whether he was being overly sensitive or the faculty-reviewer had on off-day or he rebounded in a big way, Harry became a six-time winner of our Law School's Excellence-In-Teaching Award, a record that likely never will be broken. He also received the Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award, recognizing teaching excellence University-wide, with those selections made by a panel of past faculty award-winners. It is important to note that his approaches to teaching always have combined academic rigor with a warm human touch.

And the most important things to be said about Harry relate to his character, values and personal qualities. Simply put, I do not know of anyone who has spent any time with Harry who does not like and respect him. He is kind and caring. He takes what he is doing seriously, without taking himself too seriously. He always seems to see the good in others but never touts the good in himself. He is averse to conflict but will stand up for what he believes is right.

One of my favorite thoughts was expressed in *The Education of Henry Adams*, a book published more than a century ago: "A teacher affects eternity; he never knows where his influence stops." Through his excellent teaching, his impactful writing, and the strength of his inspiring example, Harry Flechtner has had a powerfully positive influence on countless others—students, colleagues and friends—and we all are much better for it.