

HARRY FLECHTNER—A TRUE TEACHER/SCHOLAR, WITH
RHYTHM

*Ronald A. Brand**

It is fitting that the tribute to the work of Professor Harry Flechtner contained in the pages that follow is published in the *Journal of Law and Commerce*. Harry served as faculty advisor and for the *Journal*, and, following the lead of his predecessor, John Murray, he helped take the *Journal* from national to international prominence.

The retirement of a faculty colleague is often a bitter-sweet experience. While it is easy to wish that person all that is good, including a time of well-deserved respite from daily obligations, it is also a time to realize the loss to the academic community of a teacher, a scholar, and a colleague—at least on an every-day basis.

The retirement of Harry Flechtner is that, but it is something more. Harry was the rare person for whom—in the classroom, in faculty meetings (!), in international conferences, and in groups of legal scholars—it is (and I believe my research is complete on this) impossible to find anyone who does not have kind words and special memories. Throughout his thirty-five years of teaching at Pitt Law, Harry was a student favorite in the classroom, receiving the Student Bar Association's Excellence in Teaching Award six times (at least once in each of four decades).¹ At conferences, pre-moots, moots, and meetings throughout the world, Harry was a person others sought out for discussion, advice, and friendship.

Harry was the consummate teacher/scholar, proving that great teaching makes for better scholarship and great scholarship makes for better teaching. His students benefitted from his role as a the leading U.N. Sales Convention (CISG) scholar in the common law world, and his writings benefitted from his open, honest, and deep discussions with his students about the most

* Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg University Professor and Director, Center for International Legal Education, University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

¹ His retirement will make it easier for that award to be shared by others on the faculty.

current developments in the law. For Harry, every student was a colleague, and every colleague is a student. His strength is in treating everyone as an equal, and his impact often comes from his comfortable but careful questions that force deeper thinking and greater understanding on the part of anyone with whom he holds conversation.

Harry took on the editing, and then the writing, of John Honnold's leading common law treatise on the CISG,² making it a consistently better research tool with each new edition (including the one expected soon after the writing of this tribute). He brought the best of other CISG scholars to Pitt Law through his reputation and work with conferences sponsored by the Law School's Center for International Legal Education (CILE). He helped Pitt Law's *Journal of Law and Commerce* become a premier source of CISG scholarship, respected throughout the world. He was a National Correspondent for the United States at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), and a member of the group of experts who created the original UNCITRAL Digest of Case Law on the United Nations Convention on the International Sale of Goods. He was then asked by UNCITRAL to serve as Coordinator for the team of nine international legal academics that produced the updated 2012 edition of the Digest. And he was a member of the CISG Advisory Committee. As a scholar, Harry loves to challenge the thinking of others, but never denigrates another's approach or conclusions. That is a high art, achievable only by one who truly cares for both the message and the messenger.

In another life, Harry would have been a musician first and last. But, in this life, that special talent has brought joy to his students and his colleagues—on the last day of a semester of each Contracts class, and at the Vienna Konzerthaus for the opening of the Vis Moot each year. He alone in the world is the master of the three minute song about international commercial law that comes complete with footnotes and an enhanced understanding of the CISG.³

This issue of the *Journal of Law and Commerce* contains the papers from a special conference at Pitt Law as the CISG reached its fortieth anniversary and as Pitt Law celebrated the work of Harry Flechtner. Those whose articles follow are tribute to Harry's teaching (some authors were his

² HARRY FLECHTNER & JOHN HONNOLD, UNIFORM LAW FOR INTERNATIONAL SALES UNDER THE 1980 UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION (Kluwer, multiple editions).

³ See www.cisgsong.com.

students) and his scholarship. While he may be formally retired and now emeritus, Harry's influence and impact will continue through all those who have benefitted from his special style of friendship (the one word that includes all of his students, colleagues, and acquaintances) and his scholarship, whether in spoken word, written books and articles, or song.

