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Herald Times

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Beloved IU law professor dies

Harry Pratter recalled for his teaching ability

By Donita Hadley
H-T Staff Writer

Harry Pratter, whose humor, enthusiasm and philosophic insights made him one of the most beloved law professors at the Indiana University School of Law, died Monday at Bloomington Hospital. He was 84.

Born Aug. 27, 1917, in Kiev, Russia, Pratter began his long career at IU in 1950 after serving as a Bigelow Fellow at the University of Chicago School of Law, where he earned a J.D. that same year and was editor of the university's *Law Review*.

During his years as an educator at IU, Pratter taught numerous subjects, including commercial law, conflicts, contracts and family law. He also served on many law school and university committees and received a number of honors including the Gavel Award (1966), which is awarded to faculty and staff members who make exceptional contributions to the life of law students.

Speaking of how exceptional Pratter was as a teacher and human being, Alfred C. Aman Jr., dean of the IU Law School, said, "Harry was truly one of the great law professors of his time, and certainly one of the greatest professors at this law school. His

teaching ability and the way in which he could bring the law alive for generations of students enabled him to teach some very profound truths about the law in ways that students never forgot.

"His breadth and depth of intellect was extraordinary. There was little that he couldn't talk about with insight and perception. He was enormously well read and he brought to the law school classroom the humanities and philosophy, even nuances about sports that he could connect to some of the most basic questions of the law in ways that made his teaching both profound and unforgettable."

As a senior member of the IU athletics committee, Pratter was on hand to interview a young Bob Knight when the post for basketball coach opened up at IU back in the early 1970s. The two men would become friends and Pratter was welcome to drop by practice sessions to see how the Hoosiers were doing. In 2000, Bob and Karen Knight created an IU professorship in Pratter's name.

Reflecting on his longtime friendship with Pratter, Knight spoke words of deep admiration: "Of all the people I met on the faculty at Indiana University, there was no one I liked and admired more than Harry Pratter and Bob Byrnes. Harry had a great understanding of people and situations. He could traverse all levels, from streets to palaces. And I've never known anybody who had a greater capacity for kindness and friendship. He is a man I will miss greatly but always be grateful for having known."

Pratter took early retirement from IU in 1984 but continued to teach and be active at the law school through the mid-1990s. The last class he taught in April of 1994 was attended by his colleagues as well as students. Upon closing his lecture, he received a standing ovation.

He is survived by his wife, Maryrose Pratter; two sons, Jonathan Pratter of Austin, Texas, and Daniel Pratter of Bloomington; and three grandchildren, Rachel Pratter and Sarah Pratter, both of Bloomington, and David Pratter of Austin, Texas.

He was preceded in death by one son, Benjamin Pratter.

The IU School of Law is planning a memorial for Pratter.

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Pratter