

SPEECHES

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A Tribute to Professor Jon L. Jacobson

I am pleased to be asked to pay special tribute this morning to my colleague and friend Jon Jacobson. Jon is unquestionably one of the most influential and respected international law of the sea scholars in the late twentieth century. For this tribute, I hope to give those who have not had the opportunity to work with or learn from Jon some insights into this special, gifted person—and for the rest of us, a reminder of the colleague we are losing to retirement.

Jon, I used this opportunity to ask many of those with whom you have worked closely throughout the years to share with me any thoughts about you and your career as you enter into that blessed world of retirement. Warm, generous, enthusiastic, perceptive, wise, knowledgeable, and insightful gifted teacher—this is how your friends, colleagues and former students unanimously describe you. And had many of them known of your “second career” as a member of a local well-known barbershop quartet, they would have added singer extraordinaire to the list!

No one who knows you would be surprised to learn that your long and outstanding career was foreshadowed by the promise you showed when you graduated third in your class from the University of Iowa College of Law in 1963 and won the Iowa State Bar Association’s Outstanding Law Student of the Class of 1963 Award. What did surprise me, Jon, is that you served as editor-in-chief of the Iowa Law Review from 1962-1963. Now don’t get me wrong, it’s not that I question the wisdom of those who put their confidence in your scholarly abilities and leadership qualities—I applaud their foresight—but I remember that

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when you told me you had agreed to take on the role of editor-in-chief of the Journal of Ocean Development and International Law (ODIL) in 1990, I thought to myself, "I hope he realizes what he is getting into—what a thankless and frustrating task this might turn out to be." I even had brief moments of empathizing with what I believed to be your plight. But last month, after reading your resume and discovering that you had been down that road before, I realized that it was your streak of masochism as well as generosity that led you to accept that responsibility! But seriously, the reputation of ODIL as a top-notch international journal is a direct result of your tireless efforts as editor-in-chief and your insistence upon publishing only the highest quality of scholarship.

The University of Oregon and the community of ocean scholars have been extremely fortunate to have you numbered among them since you began teaching law in 1967. Even though I never had the opportunity to take a class from you, your former secretary and office manager of the Ocean and Coastal Law Center, Nancy Farmer, remarked to me that, "Year after year students have written on Jon's evaluations that he is just the BEST teacher at this law school. They love his humor and his teaching style."

Your scholarship is equally impressive. The body of scholarship on law of the sea that you are leaving behind is prodigious. As Professor Lou Henkin, a renowned international law of the sea scholar at Columbia Law School noted when I communicated with him recently, you have been a wise and knowledgeable colleague and an important contributor to the long process of preparing the law of the sea for the twenty-first century. Anyone reading the five single-spaced pages of your bibliography from your resume couldn't help but agree with Lou's assessment!

But what your resume fails to reveal is the love and respect that your colleagues and friends feel for you. I would like to share a sampling of the comments and well-wishes of some of your colleagues from across the country and of your co-workers at the University of Oregon. Professor Bill Burke of the University of Washington, another of the premiere international ocean law academics who himself retired a few years ago, had this to say: "My thoughts about Jon dwell on his sense of humor, which is outstanding and so natural it seems sometimes it is not even within his control; on his diffidence which is hardly warranted by

his great ability; on his ingenuity and inventiveness—he has a way of seeing things both through and around and the result is insights that others don't perceive; and on his forthrightness; all of which are accompanied by a gentleness and personal warmth that make him a wonderful colleague and friend."

Miranda Wecker, who is the Marine Program Manager of the Olympic Natural Resources Center in Washington State, views you as an independent and disciplined thinker who opened her eyes to perspectives that were sometimes out of synch with the favored ideology and too often quickly dismissed by self-styled progressives. She said, "He has a knack for using humor as he demands real scrutiny of the sacred cows of the day. Academics are sometimes aloof in order to project an image of unusual accomplishments. Jon has always been a warm and generous human being whose evident enthusiasm for his subject has been the source of his discipline and rigor." Professor Richard McLaughlin of the University of Mississippi Law school, who will be today's keynote speaker at lunch, reminded me that when he, Miranda, Alison Rieser, I and others were young scholars beginning our careers, Jon, you welcomed us and treated us as equals, despite the fact that we were neophytes and you were one of the top scholars in the field. You have been a role model that we have all tried to emulate in many ways.

All of us in the ocean and coastal law field have been touched by you in some way, Jon, but none more than those who have worked closely with you here at the law school's Ocean and Coastal Law Center. According to your secretary, Nancy, she misses your kindness, warmth, and sense of humor—it just isn't the same without you. Andrea Coffman, who has made your ocean and coastal law library the envy of all of us, wrote me: "I feel extremely privileged to have worked for and with Jon all these years [twenty-three to be exact!]. I have learned so much from him—about writing and editing, about the natural and necessary synergy of scholarship and librarianship, about the importance of seeing beyond the 'small stuff.' Above all, I have learned how very enjoyable and rewarding one's job can be when you work for someone who values what you do and lets you know it." Remembering back to when you first hired her to manage your research collection of ocean law publications, Andrea said: "I was amazed at my good fortune. Not only would I be working as a special collections librarian, which had been my

professional goal, but also, as I soon learned, I would be working for a very good-humored and affable fellow who liked chocolate at least as much as I did." She claims that your long-standing gift of a gift certificate from Euphoria Chocolate Company made her the envy of her friends and, in her words, "more or less guaranteed that [she] would not willingly seek employment elsewhere."

And finally, words from your good friend, colleague and neighbor, Professor Dick Hildreth. When I asked him to reflect on the years you two have worked together, he said I was forcing him to contemplate the unthinkable—your retirement. He told me that, in some ways, he can claim to be the biggest loser in your retirement. Unlike the rest of us, he had the privilege of working side-by-side with you in what he describes as a "twenty-one-year career-making relationship." In his description of all the projects you worked on together, from co-directing the Ocean and Coastal Law Center, to co-authoring, to co-teaching, it became clear to me that you two have been as much partners as colleagues. But though your retirement may end your professional relationship, the friendship that has grown up between the two of you and your families, which Dick calls the most important connection, will endure.

Jon, thank you for all you have given to our profession. Your contributions will live on long beyond your retirement in the students you have educated in your thirty-three years of teaching, in the legacy of your scholarship, and in the friendships you have made along the way. We all wish you the best in your retirement—keep on laughing and singing and being that special person—you.