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Gordon D. Schaber Tribute

James P. White*

With the passing of Gordon D. Schaber, American legal education has lost a giant who was a paramount figure in the improvement and advancement of American legal education over the past thirty years.

On Friday evening, November 20, 1992, I was privileged to participate in a gathering of 1000 to pay tribute to Dean Schaber on his 65th birthday. The theme of the dinner was "What a difference one man can make." And, what a difference in American legal education and the legal profession did Gordon Schaber make.

The development of high quality, accessible, and affordable part-time legal education offered in the evening and on Saturdays, the development of guidelines for clinical legal education, the enhancement of professional skills, the development of quality summer programs abroad, and the development of transnational graduate law degree programs were all pioneered by Gordon Schaber.

For over twenty years, Gordon Schaber gave generously of his time and talent to the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar of the American Bar Association. He served as a member of the Council of the Section, as Chairperson of the Section, as Secretary of the Section, and since 1993 as Secretary Emeritus of the Section. He served as chair of the Standards Review Committee during a period of revision of the Standards for the Approval of Law Schools by the American Bar Association. He was a recipient of the Kutak Award, the highest award of the Section, given to an individual with the highest Standards of professional responsibility and who has demonstrated substantial achievement toward increased understanding between legal education and the active practice of law.

During his term as an officer of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, Gordon Schaber provided skillful guidance and leadership in resolving difficult issues affecting legal education. Significant matters such as those of admission requirements of religiously affiliated law schools, affirmative action programs in law schools, the role of clinical law teachers, and the revision of the Standards for the Approval of Law Schools were addressed. Gordon Schaber's skill as a leader and negotiator in these matters was evident to all. He exemplified the tripartite membership of the Section: Legal education, judges, and practitioners. Dean Schaber had been all three.

Dean Schaber guided the Council and its Committees through many mazes and labyrinths. As former Harvard Law School Dean Erwin Griswold observed on one occasion writing to Gordon Schaber, "The situation was really in a state of minor chaos—you took hold of it promptly and effectively. When there was a sort of a disaster at the Philadelphia meeting, you not only moved ahead, but you came up

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with a new draft which was (a) better on the merits than what we had done before, and was (b) clearly more saleable. Then you led the Council of the Section to adopt the new proposal unanimously. Under all of the circumstances, that was really a great achievement—we would never have had anything really useful to present to the House except for your guidance and leadership”

Dean Schaber discharged the responsibilities of each office and task with prudence, care, integrity, and a high sense of professional and public responsibility. He did not seek positions for personal glory or to fatten his resume, they sought him.

I shall miss Gordon in a most profound way as American legal education and the legal profession shall miss him. Many of us loved him for what he was and what he gave. Those of us privileged to know and work with him know what a loving, caring and giving individual he was.

At its December, 1997 meeting of the Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar adopted a resolution memorializing Dean Schaber and his many contributions to American legal education. “Gordon D. Schaber; will be remembered for his integrity, his kindness, his wisdom and his incredible efforts on behalf of the Section, legal education and the profession. Legal education has lost one of its best advocates, the Section has lost its conscience, and McGeorge School of Law of the University of the Pacific has lost its dean, who developed the school into one of innovative quality legal education.”



In Memoriam
Jerome J. Curtis, Jr.
1942 - 1997