1999

Special Features -- Remembrances of Philip F. Cohen

Morris L. Cohen
Yale Law School

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers

Part of the Law Commons

Recommended Citation
Special Features -- Remembrances of Philip F. Cohen, 91 Law Library Journal 266 (1999)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Yale Law School Faculty Scholarship at Yale Law School Legal Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Scholarship Series by an authorized administrator of Yale Law School Legal Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact julian.aiken@yale.edu.
sold, and how much influence was applied, no one will ever know, but it was definitely not a trivial amount.

Over the years, he got to know my family and I got to know his. I visited his home many times and always felt like a friend rather than a client or customer. And as I look back over the years, there were numerous evenings of pleasure, of discussion, of entertainment and good food together with him. Everyone referred to him as "Phil Cohen" and addressed him as "Phil," and so did I. But in my mind, because of my tremendous respect for him, I always thought of him as "Mr. Cohen."

As I record these thoughts, I realize what a major role Phil Cohen played in the development of my career and how appreciative I am of his help. Many others can tell similar stories of Phil Cohen’s inestimable positive influence on their lives and careers, which continues even though Mr. Cohen is gone. His legacy reminds me of some words by Albert Einstein: “I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving.”

Morris L. Cohen*

I first met Phil Cohen in 1958 when I attended the AALL Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., just before commencing my first law library job as assistant librarian in the Rutgers University Law School Library. Changing careers after seven years of stressful law practice in lower Manhattan filled me with some trepidation and much uncertainty. Phil’s warm, avuncular welcome to the profession was reassuring and calming. Our common interests—rare books and the Columbia Law School (where he had worked and I had attended law school)—made for quick bonding. His easy manner and vast knowledge of both law librarianship and law publishing accelerated my learning process into those arcane but essential subjects. He persuaded me quickly that I was coming into a humane and fascinating field. He introduced me around and offered informal sketches of the many new personalities I met. His insights were later proved remarkably accurate by my own observations. Throughout my subsequent career, Phil Cohen remained a good friend, a reliable and discreet confidante, and a thoughtful sounding board for new ideas, crucial decisions, or just plain advice.

But Phil Cohen was more than an affectionate and sprightly convention companion. He was a creative and farsighted innovator in legal publishing. He was prescient about the importance of international law in the postwar world and developed research tools to meet the needs of the legal profession in this country and abroad. His bibliographic reference works became a vital part of the reference shelves of law librarians. The publications coming from Oceana and Transmedia filled the varied needs of legal scholars, practitioners, and librarians. The Legal

* Law Librarian (Retired) and Emeritus Professor of Law, Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Library, New Haven, Connecticut.
Docket and Legal Almanac series served the lay public as well and were forerunners of later publishing efforts designed for the general public. Phil brought his own experiences and interests to bear on his work. His love of books led him to works of bibliography; his deep feeling for England led him to work with English materials and use English authors and editors; his cosmopolitan approach led him to embrace foreign and transnational law as subject fields.

Phil Cohen will be remembered by all who knew him. His contributions to our libraries, to our profession, and to our lives will be lasting monuments.

Dan F. Henke*

Philip F. Cohen, successful international publisher, gave of himself in educating his family, his business colleagues, and his customer law librarians with his knowledge of the world and its peoples. He enriched their lives by introducing them to the joys, benefits, and camaraderie of foreign travel.

His willingness to publish authors when they were establishing their careers at a time when American ventures for international cooperation and law were in their infancy made a timely and significant contribution to legal scholarship and to the development of multinational enterprises. A list of Oceana’s publications, international projects, and conferences is evidence of his concern for academic freedom and the welfare of people throughout the world. As a lover of books and art, he made a substantial contribution to American academic and business culture. He was living proof that there is more to publishing than obsession with the “bottom line.” As a primary example of the “American Entrepreneur Success Story,” he paid dividends of substantive knowledge to his customer base and was willing to share the fruits of his labor and keen vision with educational and community endeavors. All this he accomplished with the help, love, and loyalty of a remarkable family and staff who emulate his values and traditions.

I first met Phil Cohen in his publisher’s suite at the AALL Annual Meeting in 1956 in Philadelphia. In the forty-two years that followed I observed him as a courageous and kind man with a joyous spirit of accomplishment. He offered encouragement to those of us who were young and seemed to take great vicarious pleasure in our successes in which he often played a part. To Berkeley and Boalt Hall,¹ he provided on approval a lot of colorful Canon Law tomes in leather bindings complete with locks, the contents of which were manuscripts handwritten by monks. These provided us with demonstrative evidence that the law library was really doing something to promote the Robbins Fund. The late Mrs. Robbins was visibly impressed with the books and left the entire Robbins fortune to the law library.

* Professor Emeritus, University of California, Hastings College of Law, San Francisco, California.

1. Editor's Note: Professor Henke served as Librarian and Professor of Law at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1959 to 1970.