
A

STORIED CAREER



Legal education has changed tremendously over the past 53 years, but at least one thing has remained constant—the steadfast presence of Jack Harlan Friedenthal. Since launching his professorial career at Stanford Law School in 1958, the popular legal educator and influential scholar has touched the lives of thousands of students and shaped the development of civil procedure in the federal courts.

BY JAMIE L. FREEDMAN

Revered for his hallmark warmth, wit, and humility, Professor Friedenthal has served the GW Law community since 1988, first as dean for a decade and now as Edward F. Howrey Professor of Trial Advocacy, Litigation, and Professional Responsibility. A mainstay of GW's civil procedure, evidence, and conflict of laws faculties, he is nationally renowned for his illustrious *Civil Procedure* casebook, now in its 10th edition, and *Civil Procedure* hornbook series, two of the most influential works in the field.

Tributes have poured in from around the globe, lauding Mr. Friedenthal's stellar contributions to students and the profession alike.

"In a half century and more of dedication to legal education, Jack Friedenthal has earned the respect, appreciation, and affection of legions of jurists, teachers, and students," declared U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who served with him on the *Harvard Law Review* in 1957-1958 and wrote an article honoring her longtime friend in the November 2009 issue of *The George Washington Law Review*.

"He took a law school already recognized as good to new heights of excellence, building a strong faculty both through lateral appointments and by attracting talented young teachers," Justice Ginsburg said. "For all he has done as a law school leader, scholar, and teacher, and as a community citizen striving to improve the lot of the least advantaged, Jack merits a rousing Bravo. I anticipate encores in the years to come."





CHRIS FEYN

Professor Thomas Morgan, Professor and former Dean Jack Friedenthal, and Dean Paul Schiff Berman socialize at an ice cream social in late May.

Reflecting on his storied career in legal education, Mr. Friedenthal confesses that “law school professor” was nowhere to be found in his original career blueprint. “My entry into teaching was both unique and a fluke,” he recalls. “I thought I’d go out and make my fortune practicing law in the big city and had even lined up a job at a New York firm, which I planned to begin after graduation.”

His plans suddenly changed when, impressed by the scholarly ability of the third-year law student, one of his professors at Harvard—who was visiting from Stanford Law School—recruited him for a one-year assistant professorship teaching civil procedure at Stanford. “Taking the job required a few logistics, because my wife, Jo Anne, who I married just a few days before graduation, was a first-year student at Harvard Law School—one of 12 women in her class of nearly 500—and would have to transfer if I took the job. But she was a good sport, so we went, and somehow or other I ended up staying at Stanford for 30 years!”

He headed back east in 1988 to become dean of GW Law School—enticed by the challenge of “making a difference” at a school that he felt was “in an excellent position to spring forward.”

“I was blessed by having an excellent predecessor—Jerry Barron—who had built a very strong base at GW, and it was exciting and rewarding to have the opportunity to build upon that base,” reflects Mr. Friedenthal, who regards his decade at GW’s helm as a capstone of his career.

He developed a close and enduring friendship with Professor Barron—another GW institution—who has served on GW Law’s faculty for nearly half a century.

“Jack Friedenthal brought his many talents to this Law School,” Mr. Barron says of his longtime colleague and friend. “As a hands-on dean, Jack was intimately involved with all the different constituencies of the Law School. He greatly expanded the physical facility and strengthened the faculty. Jack and his wife, Jo Anne, also have a warm, generous, and personal side, and my wife, Myra, and I treasure our long friendship with them.”

Highlights of Mr. Friedenthal’s tenure as dean were many. More than a third of GW Law’s current faculty members were hired during his deanship—including some of the nation’s most prominent legal scholars. He instituted research professorships and endowed chairs for accomplished faculty members, created the Dean’s Board of Advisors, and greatly expanded GW’s clinical programs. He also enhanced the Law School’s physical plant, renovating existing spaces and adding classrooms and faculty offices to accommodate the expanding student body and curriculum.

Mr. Friedenthal dramatically increased the diversity of the faculty, adding more women and people of color to the Law School’s professorial ranks. Under his stewardship, GW’s student body also increased in diversity; when he arrived as dean in 1988, one-eighth of the student body were members of minority groups, and by the end of his tenure, that percentage had increased to nearly one-third. The percentage of women students at GW Law multiplied during that period as well.

“Another highlight was revising the financial base of the Law School, which enabled me and my successors to go forward in developing the school’s resources,” Mr. Friedenthal

adds. “We went from being fully funded by the GW budget to a system where essentially the Law School is on its own bottom, which has increased the amount of money we retain from the resources we develop and enhanced the administration of the school.”

Through the years, Mr. Friedenthal has been one of the nation’s foremost contributors to the field of civil procedure. Since 1969, his seminal casebook, *Civil Procedure*, has been a fixture in law school classrooms, shaping the way generations of students, scholars, and practitioners view the field. He and his co-authors, Arthur R. Miller, John E. Sexton, and Helen Hershkoff, continually update the work and produce an annual supplement.

“Jack is one of those people who is steady as a rock,” says Mr. Miller, who met his co-author and friend in 1955 when both were Harvard first-year law students, and wrote a lengthy tribute to him in the November 2009 *George Washington Law Review*. “That solidity has characterized our collaboration, and his application of analytical skills to the materials placed under his superintendency is truly special. It also has characterized his deanship, his star-quality teaching, and his personal life.”

Calling Mr. Friedenthal a “legal gem” in her November 2009 article honoring him in *The George Washington Law Review*, Mary Kay Kane, former dean of the Hastings College of Law, lauded his “superb ability to keep on top of an amazing amount of detail and to present it clearly, always with an understanding of the broader context in which procedural change has taken place.

“Not only has he suggested solutions to procedural problems confronted by the courts, but he has been a master at explaining some of the nuances and implications of various rule changes and the Supreme Court’s development of new procedural standards,” said Professor Kane, who co-authored the acclaimed *Civil Procedure* hornbook with Mr. Friedenthal and Mr. Miller. “I am honored to be one of his co-authors because it has allowed me to work closely with a truly first-rate lawyer and scholar.”

Mr. Friedenthal has made a number of other significant legal contributions on the national stage. An avid sports fan who is passionate about GW basketball, Mr. Friedenthal served three terms on the National Collegiate Athletic Association’s Division One Infractions Committee as a sports adjudicator and is now a member of the Infractions Appeals Committee. For five years, he served as a special master charged with settling disputes between the National Football League and


the NFL Players Association. “That work got me to a number of Super Bowls, which I greatly enjoyed,” he says. Over the years, he has also served as a frequent consultant on matters of court procedure, employment discrimination, legal assistance programs, and foreign conflicts of laws.

Closer to home, he served for several years as acting chair of GW’s committee on sports and recreation and is routinely involved in the university’s NCAA reaccreditation process, which takes place every 10 years.

“Jack Friedenthal continues to lead by example,” says Gregory E. Maggs, interim dean of GW Law School, whose relationship with him goes back nearly two decades. “He remains a prolific scholar and teaches important courses with some of the largest enrollments in the Law School. No one works harder on committee assignments. He has generously mentored me since I arrived at the Law School as an associate professor in 1993, and I know that he has done the same for many of my colleagues.”

On the home front, Jack and Jo Anne Friedenthal are looking forward to celebrating their 54th wedding anniversary later this year. An accomplished lawyer, Mrs. Friedenthal served for many years as associate general counsel of Freddie Mac prior to her retirement. The couple’s oldest daughter, Ellen, is a vice president of Bank of America Leasing, living in San Francisco; daughter Amy is a physician in Woodbridge, Va., and their son, Mark, who graduated from GW Law School in 1995, is a public defender representing children in inner-city Baltimore.

Reflecting on his long and distinguished career, Mr. Friedenthal says it’s been quite a ride. “Working in legal education has given me great opportunities and great joy,” he states. “It’s been wonderful to get to know so many great people who are truly accomplished and to educate future generations of lawyers.”

Life recently came full circle for him at his wife’s 50th law school reunion. “When I worked at Stanford, and later as dean of GW, I used to send personal, handwritten notes to every admitted student along with their acceptance letters,” he says. “For years, people have been coming up to me in Washington and elsewhere to say they still have my notes and that the individual attention made a real difference in their law school selection process. When we were back at Stanford for my wife’s 50th reunion, the keynote speaker told me that it was my note that made him choose Stanford over the many other schools he’d been admitted to. That really made me feel great.” 



He has been a master
at explaining some
of the nuances and
implications of
various rule changes
and the Supreme
Court’s development
of new procedural
standards.

