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## John Calamari—A Tribute

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**DEDICATION  
THE BOARD OF EDITORS  
OF THE  
FORDHAM LAW REVIEW**

DEDICATES THIS ISSUE  
TO

**PROFESSOR JOHN CALAMARI**

AGNES & IGNATIUS M. WILKINSON PROFESSOR OF LAW

**JOHN CALAMARI\* — A TRIBUTE**

*JOSEPH M. PERILLO\*\**

TO almost forty years of Fordham Law School graduates, the phrases "John Calamari" and "Alma Mater" are functional equivalents. While he is nationally known as a writer of law books and other legal publications, has served as consultant to vital and prestigious state commissions, chaired various important law school committees, served on the faculty senate of the University and written briefs in noteworthy cases, nothing in his order of priorities has surpassed his dedication to the classroom—or, more accurately put, his dedication to the students of Fordham Law School. As his partner in a number of publications and other ventures, I can give concrete testimony of this dedication by revealing the genesis of the hornbook and casebook that bear our names.

The year is 1966. I am in my third year of teaching, he is in his fourteenth. We have adjoining offices. He visits my office to discuss the increasing demands of the contracts course. The Uniform Commercial Code has been enacted. New common-law issues have evolved. The evidence teachers have dropped the parol evidence rule from their courses. There is too much to cover. His suggested solution is to write up parts of the course to hand out to students, thus abbreviating the amount of class-

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\*\* Professor of Law, Fordham Law School. Co-author with Professor Calamari of: *The Law of Contracts* (West Publishing Co. 1970, 2d ed. 1977, 3d ed. 1987); *Contracts Cases and Problems* (West Publishing Co. 1978), (with Calamari & Bender) (2d ed. 1989); *Contracts*, Black Letter Series (West Publishing Co. 1983).

room time spent on topics selected for the handouts. My reply was that we might as well write up the whole course and publish it. He was skeptical about the receptiveness of publishers, but we wrote two chapters of a proposed hornbook and sent it to West Publishing, which signed us up with alacrity. Thus, the hornbook stemmed from his concern about the classroom.

So did the casebook. After the first publication of the hornbook in May 1970, his reaction was to ask what should we do in the classroom now that our lecture notes were in print? Again, the classroom was his primary concern. I had no clear solution. He did. He spent the summer of 1970 drawing up the initial set of problems that, after testing and revision, eventually went into *Cases and Problems on Contracts*, first published in 1977. The problem method was not his invention. However, while other coursebooks had used it in legal education, to my knowledge none had used it in such a sustained and thoroughgoing way. This effort has made an indelible mark in legal publishing; many other coursebooks have followed its innovative approach. Thus, John Calamari's influence is felt in classrooms throughout the country.

He has taught two generations of law students the skill of cutting through the most intricate factual situations to arrive at simple but accurate statements of the legal issues involved. His students, with characteristic ingratitude, have consistently questioned further, pressing to obtain the solution to the issues he has taught them to identify. In the best neosocratic tradition, John Calamari has, to thousands of such questions, replied, "Who knows?!" Students have never regarded this reply a confession of ignorance. Rather, they have realized that he has brought them to the frontiers of charted knowledge.

As befits a great teacher, he was a brilliant student. His receipt of a cum laude degree from Fordham College was followed by an awesome record at Fordham Law School. Awesome grades were not easily available at Fordham, then or now. There is external proof of this. When I asked him on the occasion of his retirement, "What was your proudest professional accomplishment?" he replied, "I received the highest grade in the state on the bar examination."

John Calamari's services to his profession, school, university and country have been many. But it is not only professional skills and achievements that are the mark of a person. Traits of character and personality are the indelible impress of John Calamari. One notices his courtly manner before his razor-sharp mind; his constant quest for learning before his encyclopedic knowledge of the law; his broad tolerance before his deeply held convictions; and his good fellowship before his inevitably sound advice.