

2002

Dedication: A Tribute to a Giant

John D. Feerick
Fordham University School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/flr>



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

John D. Feerick, *Dedication: A Tribute to a Giant*, 71 Fordham L. Rev. 623 (2002).
Available at: <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/flr/vol71/iss3/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fordham Law Review by an authorized editor of FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. For more information, please contact tmelnick@law.fordham.edu.

SYMPOSIUM: A TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR JOSEPH M. PERILLO

DEDICATION

A TRIBUTE TO A GIANT

John D. Feerick

“Let us raise a standard to which the wise and the honest can repair.”

Although George Washington did not have a law professor in mind when he made his famous utterance, can it be seriously questioned that Professor Joseph Perillo has met that standard in his profession and at the school to which he has devoted the greater part of his life? He has enjoyed an illustrious career and may he be blessed with a great many more years of “tilling the soil” in his chosen field, a field in which he has matched in productivity and excellence such giants in the law as Samuel Williston and Arthur Corbin.

Professor Perillo came to Fordham in 1963, after a brief stint in the practice of law and then a Fulbright scholarship at the University of Florence. In a relatively few short years he and his colleague and friend, John D. Calamari, would team up to produce a nationally recognized treatise and case book on the law of contracts. Their books today can be found in every law school classroom and library, and far beyond, helping law students to understand the meaning of a “contract,” assisting lawyers in their counseling and advocacy roles, and enabling judges to apply the right principles to difficult factual issues. So many of the School’s most prominent graduates credit Professor Perillo for giving them the thorough grounding in contracts which kindled their love of the law and their dedication to the profession. His works have certainly set the standard for “supreme excellence” as encouraged by our first president.

But Professor Perillo’s work in the field of contract law is only part of the story. A law professorship carries not only a scholarship responsibility but also teaching and service responsibilities—responsibilities which Professor Perillo has discharged in an extraordinary way.

As a teacher, whether in a classroom or at another podium, Professor Perillo has never yielded to the human temptation to “wing it” or “recycle,” so to speak, his notes from the prior year. As great a

teacher as he is, he remains a great student, reading every advance sheet and article imaginable to stay current in his field and learn from the insights of others and the controversies which are the grist of a lawyer's work. In all of his teaching he brings boundless energy and enthusiasm, revealing his passion for the law in its grandest tradition.

Professor Perillo's service to his profession and school match his prodigious scholarship and teaching. First and foremost, he has enriched his profession by the quality of his path-breaking scholarship. This has not only been expressed in his own books and articles, too many to mention, but in his undertaking to serve as the general editor of a landmark in the law of contracts. An ordinary person would be content enough just to keep his (or her) own work current—but to do so as well for the work of the late Arthur Corbin is of Olympian proportions.

As for Fordham Law School, Professor Perillo has given a level of service second to no one in the school's entire history. He has taught numerous courses, helping deans whenever asked. In 1981-82 he served as the School's Acting Dean. This is what we said about that service at the time:

An acting deanship is usually an interregnum, a caretaker administration. No one expects anything to be done. Joe Perillo did not behave like an acting dean. Things got done. An innovative Legal Process course was inserted into the first year curriculum. Plans for renovation and expansion of the Law School building proceeded apace. Significant additions were made to the faculty. The law school ran smoothly and well. There were no leftover problems when I arrived on July 1—except the ubiquitous (but, one hopes, not eternal) financial challenges.

Joe Perillo's one year in office will be recorded in the history of the Law School as an acting deanship. In the appreciative minds of the Fordham Law School community, it will be thought of as the Perillo Deanship.

During his almost 40-year career at Fordham, Professor Perillo has chaired or been a member of practically every committee at the school. He chaired the Appointments Committee for a number of years, the self-study committee in connection with an American Bar Association inspection, and numerous task forces and ad hoc committees. For me, he was almost always the first I turned to in moments of urgency and importance. Three particular services stand out—his assuming the directorship of the Stein Institute on Law and Ethics in 1983 when we had no full time scholar and teacher in that field; his taking on the directorship of our law school's first summer program abroad and helping make it in its very first year an historic program, functioning in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; and his acceptance of the moderatorship of the *Fordham Law Review* until then Professor (now Dean) William Treanor returned

from his leave of absence to serve in the United States Department of Justice. In addition, unbeknownst to me, somehow or other Professor Perillo managed to find time to twice be the Cubmaster of Pack 9 of Nyack, covering part of the Cub Scout careers of his two sons. All of these acts of service, in the last period of years alone when the scholarship demands on him were so enormous, qualify Professor Perillo for "sainthood."

Not surprisingly when, in 1997, the Law School was asked to recommend someone to be the first occupant of a Distinguished Fordham University Professorship, the School responded with the name of Professor Perillo. He now occupies that professorship at the School.

Professor Joseph Perillo represents not only the best qualities of the scholar, teacher, and servant of justice but the very best of the Fordham tradition. His high ideals, his great personal integrity, and his concern for others are truly a beacon for all his faculty colleagues and his students. He is what we call "one in a million."

As the citation from his bene merenti medal from Fordham University concluded, I conclude:

"Joe has lived up to his family tradition and to the old Italian proverb that states, 'Chi ha tempo non aspetta tempo.' (Literally translated, 'He who has time should not wait for time.'—in other words, 'Don't put it off—do it now')."

I simply add that it is my fervent hope that this seminal year in the life of Professor Joseph Perillo will be followed by many more years of service at Fordham Law School and to the profession we both love. I thank him deeply for his special friendship and for his outstanding contributions to the law school.

Notes & Observations