Roger Abrams, 1986-93

Paul R. Joseph*
Roger Abrams, 1986-93

Paul R. Joseph

Abstract

When word went around that Roger was leaving to accept deanship at Rutgers, Newark, I E-mailed my congratulations to him on the computer network that did not exist before he came to Nova.
One personal story: Because Joe is a jogger, I bought him a pedometer for some occasion or another. It was not until the pedometer emerged from the Snoopy wrapping paper that I realized how worthless it was for Joe. Nevertheless, he said he loved it because this gift showed I never even think of him as blind. In fact, Joe’s lack of sight has never affected his vision. When Nova was in trouble, Joe saw what needed to be done and steered us on a steady course to safe harbor. Thank you, Joe.

When word went around that Roger was leaving to accept the deanship at Rutgers, Newark, I E-mailed my congratulations to him on the computer network that did not exist before he came to Nova. Something in this act caused me to think about how much had changed since Roger became a part of us and how much we have to thank him for.

I came to Nova in 1984, a time that may one day be remembered as “the good old days.” But to me, as a new member of the faculty, some things didn’t seem very good at all. My faculty colleagues were very good, as they still are today. In fact, the faculty was the biggest plus for me about Nova. Many of the raw materials for positive growth existed, but forward motion seemed stymied. Morale was buffeted by financial uncertainties and a lack of an adequate physical plant, which drew intense and uncomfortable scrutiny from the American Bar Association. Relations with the university were deteriorating.

Roger Abrams acted as the catalyst for Nova’s growth and for the creation of its stability. He sought out the best in each of us and encouraged its development. While he got down to the business of overhauling the Law Center, he created the space in which we could excel. And he did it all with a smile that became famous.

Roger realized that to serve students well we needed an adequately staffed administrative structure. He built that structure, and from Career and Student Services to Development and Admissions, we can see the positive results. Roger also supported the acquisition of better technology. When I sit in my office conducting a Westlaw search on my computer, I don’t generally stop to thank Roger, so let me do so here.

Oh yes, my office: a clean, bright, sparkling workplace where my books do not mildew and my nose does not wrinkle at the smell. Lecture halls are tiered without sightline obstructions. The library is a three-floor invitation to productive work. The atrium, a sun-lit tree-filled area, has truly become the hub of the Law Center—a place where guest speakers and programs bring us together, just as Roger knew that it would.

Buildings do not spring into existence because we wish to have them. Millions of dollars must be raised. This required an excellent development
Towards a Bill of Rights For Russia: Progress and Roadblocks

Vasily A. Vlasihin

Almost three years before the Soviet Union collapsed after the failed coup d'etat, I arrived at JFK International Airport as a member of a Soviet lawyers' delegation. At the airport, I was involved in a short but impressive dialogue with a United States customs officer. The officer, a young man, checked my passport and after seeing what was inscribed in my United States visa stamp asked me, "are you a Soviet lawyer?" I was too tired to explain that although I was trained as a lawyer, I never practiced, and that my work focused primarily on research. So, I just nodded affirmatively.

"Oh, how wonderful! Welcome to the United States," replied the officer, "but is there any law in the Soviet Union?"

Customs check-points are not the best fitting place for academic lectures, so I just murmured confidentially in response, "there is, and quite a lot of it."

If I had been willing to give a lecture at the customs check-point, and if the officer had been willing to listen, I could have told him that during the previous seventy years of the Soviet regime, the country developed a certain legal system. This system of laws, as in any other country, is comprised of a Constitution, statutes, executive acts and administrative regulations, and other enactments. There are also legal institutions that are designed to be guardians of the legal system. These institutions include a judiciary, a bar, and prosecutorial and law enforcement agencies.

However, when I advised the customs officer that there is "quite a lot of law in the Soviet Union, I was not attempting to commit perjury in front of a representative of the United States Government. Quantitatively, Soviet law has been developing rather rapidly. In the second half of the 1980's, there were more than thirty thousand legal enactments adopted only by the national legislature and the government.

* Head of U.S. Legal Studies, Institute of the U.S. & Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Jurist Degree, Moscow University School of Law, 1974; Special Student, Harvard Law School, 1977; Candidate of Juridical Science Degree (equivalent of S.J.D.), Institute of Soviet Legislation, 1980.

This essay is based upon author's remarks before the 1991 Annual Meeting of the Kansas Bar Association. It was revised and updated in respect of the latest constitutional developments in Russia. This essay was solicited for the Law Review by Professor Paul R Joseph.