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# HENRY KING: REFLECTIONS ON A LEGAL GIANT

*Jonathan L. Entin*<sup>†</sup>

Henry King and I were suite mates for 24 years. Even now, four months after his passing, I find it disorienting not to have Henry—often in an elegant suit and sneakers—stop in my office to say hello and, after looking at the color of my shirt, remark that it must be a white-collar day or a blue-collar day.

Henry had an insatiable curiosity about almost everything. Like a great journalist, he was always asking other people questions because he knew that everyone has a story to tell. But Henry had his own views, and he was never shy about expressing them. At faculty workshops and at the Canada-U.S. Law Institute conferences that he organized and led for so many years, Henry regularly asked the first question, and it was usually a humdinger. Henry had a unique perspective as a private practitioner, public servant, and professor, and he brought that perspective to everything he did as a member of our faculty.

What really stands out for me about the CUSLI conferences is how tight a ship Henry ran. Nobody got on the program without a paper in hand ahead of time. And for years he kept the proceedings on schedule with an enormous cowbell. After that bell disappeared, he found a smaller one. When that one disappeared, he just clapped his hands and announced that the next session was about to start. You could hardly tell the difference.

Henry had an inexhaustible supply of wonderful stories. He seemed to know everyone who was worth knowing and to have worked with all of them. And, yes, he did send his pregnant wife home from Nuremberg so that there would be no question of the

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child's status as a natural-born citizen if she ever decided to run for President. But in the circles in which Henry traveled this was not pretentious, just prudent.

Even as he traveled in rarified circles that the rest of us can only dream about, Henry was also a wonderful colleague. Not only was he great to talk with, he was always willing to provide moral and intellectual support when it was needed. For example, a few years ago I got cited by the university for having "excess combustibles" in my office. When he found out, Henry instantly volunteered to represent me. I was, of course, enormously flattered that a real lawyer might actually come to my assistance, and without charge to boot. At the same time, I understood that Henry's offer was not entirely altruistic. He knew that he would be pretty high on the list of suspects if the university actually decided to make all of us clean up our offices.

Let me close with a Henry King story that illustrates his impact on our school and the enormous hole that we will never manage to fill now that he's gone. For quite a few years I coordinated a series of programs for first-year students that would help them see some broad themes in the law that cut across the courses they were taking and also to introduce them to the possibilities open to aspiring lawyers. I always asked Henry to speak at one of the sessions, and things always went the same way.

No matter how early I left my office, Henry was already in the room where the program would take place.

I'd get there and see the students wandering in looking curious about what that unknown older man down front would say.

After the students settled into their seats, I would introduce Henry. I could never decide how much to say, because if I gave him the introduction that he deserved I would take up the whole hour. But not to worry, no matter what I said about him, Henry would bound to the lectern and launch into his talk. Within a minute the students were awestruck by the passionate and eloquent septua- or octogenarian, banging the lectern for emphasis, who seemed to be no more than middle-aged.

And this wasn't a transitory phenomenon. Henry didn't teach first-years, but his classes used to fill almost instantly when registration began. In fact, it was a rare second-year student who could get a spot.

Henry King was an idealist to the very end. Not a starry-eyed optimist, for he had seen some of the worst things that humans can do and helped to hold the malefactors legally accountable. But his experience at Nuremberg motivated him to do everything he could to

promote the international rule of law, and he was doing that to the end of his life.

I saw Henry for the last time just a few days before he died. I knew that Henry wasn't doing so well. I had visited him a few times and spoken with him on the phone fairly regularly, but I hadn't seen him in a while. Even on that last visit, Henry's mind was sharp, and he asked me how I was doing and what was happening at school. He was looking forward to teaching this fall no matter how much his body was betraying him.

Justice Holmes urged us to "live greatly in the law."<sup>\*</sup> Henry King surely lived greatly—and not only in the law. Thank you, Henry, for everything.

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<sup>\*</sup> OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, JR., *The Profession of the Law*, in COLLECTED LEGAL PAPERS 29, 30 (1920).

