

EDITORIAL

Albert H. Kritzer (1928-2010): An Appreciation

Albert Kritzer's worldwide friends and admirers were greatly saddened last year by the news of his sudden death on June 1, 2010 while on a visit to Alexandria, Egypt, to receive the 2010 Career Achievement Award at the 4th Arab Conference for Commercial and Maritime Law. Mr. Kritzer's passing has deprived the international legal community of a very distinguished international commercial law scholar, teacher, and archivist, one who believed passionately in the capacity of international commerce to promote peaceful relationships and who through his foundational work in establishing the CISG database at the Pace University law school in New York, did more than anyone else to provide ready access, in the English language, to the arbitral awards and judgments, wherever rendered, on the Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (CISG).

Albert Kritzer's personal qualities were no less remarkable than his professional accomplishments. He was a wonderfully warm and friendly individual, a great humanist and lover of the arts and fine food, and always ready to respond to enquiries concerning any aspect of CISG. He attended religiously the annual Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot in Vienna and could be found there holding court at the *Juridicum* of the University of Vienna law school surrounded by admiring student mooters and professional colleagues from several continents.

Al was a native of New York. After undergraduate studies in economics at the College of William and Mary, he went on to a very distinguished career as a law student at the Cornell Law School from which he graduated with distinction in 1951. After his call to the New York Bar, he served as a judge advocate in the U.S. Air Force in Japan during the Korean war and, after his

discharge, became a member of the New York law firm of Donovan, Leisure, Newton & Irvine. He then joined the legal branch of the General Electric Corporation where he spent the next 25 years of his career and became G.E.'s International Sales Counsel. It was during this period that he developed his expertise in the drafting of international commercial contracts and authored his pioneering five-volume *International Contract Manual*.

Al joined the newly created Pace University School of Law Institute of International Commercial Law in 1991 and remained there until his death. Although his official status was that of executive secretary of the Institute and adjunct professor of law, for most of that period he *was* the Institute and was the driving force of the newly established *Electronic Library of the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods and International Contract*, more popularly known as the CISG database. Maintaining and developing the database was (and remains) a formidable challenge. In the common law world the ready accessibility of judgments is taken for granted. This is much less true of decisions rendered in civil law jurisdictions and, in any event, in both civil and common law jurisdictions arbitral awards cannot be published except with the consent of the arbitrating parties. Then too there is the problem of translation and of finding competent and reliable translators.

Al personally directed all these efforts (with the important assistance, in the translation of foreign judgments, of the Roy Goode Centre for Commercial Law Studies at Queen Mary University in London) while also welcoming professional colleagues from abroad and assisting graduate students in their research projects.

The New York State Bar Association recognized Al's pioneering work by making him the recipient of its International Affairs Award. His international colleagues followed suit, in 2008, by dedicating a *Festschrift* in his honour to mark his 80th birthday. As noted earlier, Al was in Alexandria at the time of his death to receive another award. Al had prepared a paper responding to the award whose theme was the early history of international commercial law. The paper traced the important contributions made by Muslim scholars and Muslim traders long before the importance of international trade and the need for supranational principles of commercial law was resuscitated in classical Roman law and, still later, by the law merchant in Europe.

Never one to rest on his laurels, at the time of his death Al was busy with Professor Louis del Duca of the Penn State Dickinson School of Law crafting the details of projects for the mediation and resolution of cross-border Consumer to Business (C-2-B) conflicts and, at a broader level, facilities for Online Dispute Resolution (ODR).

It can truly be said of Albert Kritzer that he lived a very full and rewarding life. His many friends and admirers will long cherish the memories of their friendships with him and his enduring contributions to international commercial law.

J.S.Z.