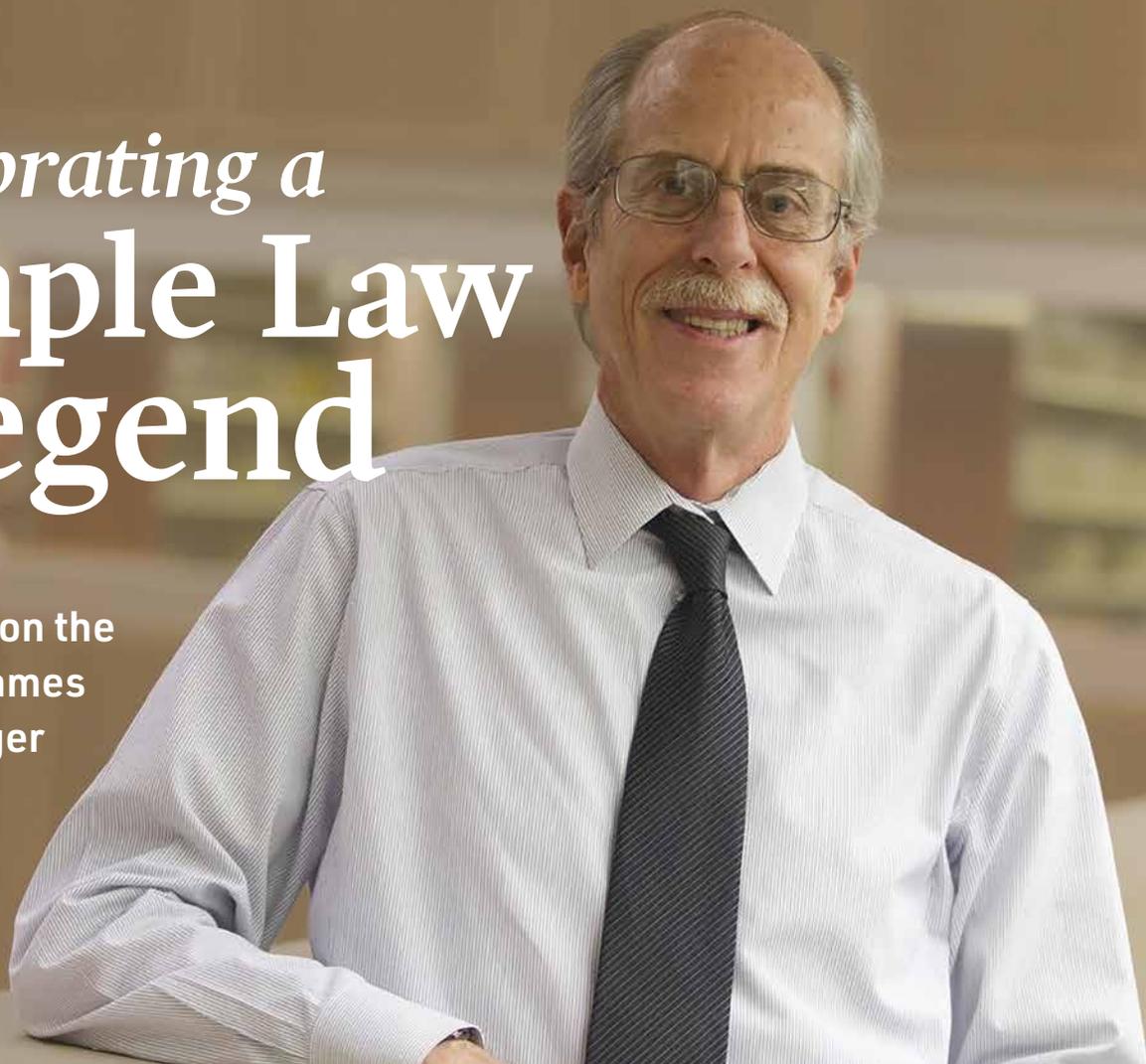


Celebrating a Temple Law Legend

Reflections on the
Legacy of James
Shellenberger



To most, it would appear to be an ordinary piece of furniture — a round table in the middle of an office. But those who knew the late Professor James Shellenberger understood that table represented so much more.

Symbolic of a life and career, this simple round table spoke volumes about the professor who invited any guest — from students to faculty to visitors — to sit alongside him.

“You could walk by morning or night and see Shell talking to students about a range of things — from a nuanced area of criminal procedure or an ethical issue that arose in an internship, to family, careers, baseball, or struggles,” explained Assistant Dean for Students and Strategic Initiatives Jen Bretschneider.

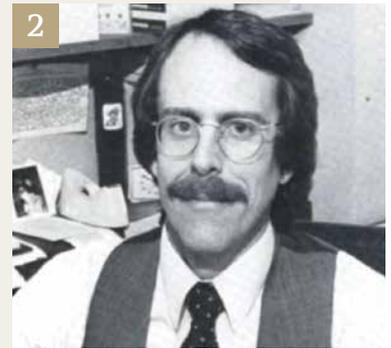
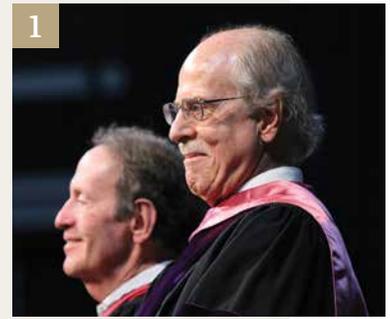
That round table suggested a sense of togetherness, representing involvement in a shared experience and journey. So, sitting around that table with Shellenberger created a spirit of camaraderie.

The beloved professor knew the importance of both work and play. Once in his company, you would learn of his passion for fishing and his devotion to the Phillies. A glimpse behind his office door with a life-sized poster of pitcher Steve Carlton proved his fondness.

Shell's mindfulness of the need to balance work and life made an impression on Jeremy Menkowitz '06, president of Temple Law Alumni Association, his first night abroad in Temple's Rome program. "A student from a different law school told Professor Shellenberger she reviewed the syllabus and was wondering what reading she could do to get ahead before classes started. He said, 'Look around. You're in Rome. Go outside, wander around, explore.' This same attitude carried over even when he questioned what we were all doing inside the day before his final. He knew we were studying. But it was such an important reminder to us as students that while our education was important, there were much more important things in life we needed to remember."

The students clearly appreciated his approach, recognizing him seven times with the George P. Williams Award, given to honor the professor who made the most impact on their law school career — a feat unmatched by any other faculty member. Beyond the awards, however, "It's really about the connection you make with students," explained Rob Bartow, Laura H. Carnell Professor of Law. "Students loved him and respected him. They cared about him because he cared about them."

Reflecting his dedication to the success of incoming students, Bartow recalled Shellenberger's advocacy for piloting a short course at orientation. The course, which is designed to acclimate students to the law school experience, continues to this day. Bartow explained, "Shell was wonderful at caring about students and finding ways to make their success much more likely."



PHOTOS: 1- Shell at a Commencement ceremony with former Dean Bob Reinstein 2- A young Professor James Shellenberger in his office 3- Temple Law Alumni Association (TLAA) Past President Sheryl Axelrod '93, Murray Shusterman '36 (deceased) and the late JoAnne A. Epps with Professor Shellenberger receiving the TLAA Shusterman Faculty Award 4- Seated in the jury box, Shell attends a PA Bar Admission Ceremony at City Hall for recent graduates 5- The summer of 2012, students and faculty attending Temple Law's Rome Program with Shell, who co-directed the program, in Titignano as they prepared for a multi-course lunch.





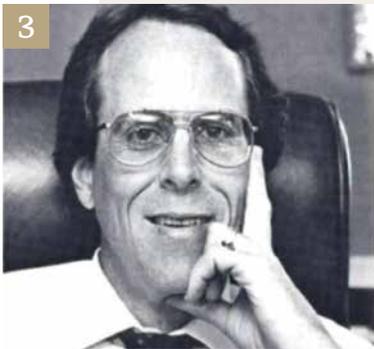
PHOTOS: 1- Shell celebrating with law students winning the Student Public Interest Network (SPIN) Deans' Cup 2- Shell chats with a student by the Klein steps 3- A 1991 photo of Professor Shellenberger from Temple Law's yearbook Reinstatement 4- Dean Rebouché and Amanda Wagner with Shell at a 2023 prize ceremony on Commencement day 5- Shell and Dr. Richard Baron, husband of Professor Jane Baron, participate in a Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service



EARLY IMPACT

Immediately after earning his JD from Villanova University in 1972, Professor Shellenberger served as an assistant district attorney in Philadelphia. He then practiced in the litigation department of Schnader, Harrison, Segal & Lewis. When he joined Temple Law in 1980 as a lecturer in law, he was working for the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in various roles.

Murray got to know Shellenberger through his founding of the Academic Core Enrichment Program, which assists first-year law students in transitioning to the rigors of legal studies, emphasizing the development of effective learning and study skills.



Over his more than 40-year career at Temple Law, Shellenberger held leadership positions that included Assistant Dean for Students, Director of the Legal Research and Writing Program, and Director of the Temple Law Rome Program.

Murray described Shellenberger as a “natural-born educator and teacher. He just really wanted to see Temple students succeed.” Since the bar serves as the profession’s gateway, “He didn’t want anyone to go through the whole three years then have the bar be the roadblock.”



Each role shaped the culture of Temple Law and its core mission to care for students. “Everyone here cares tremendously about the students,” noted Gabriela Femenia, Director of the Law Library and Associate Professor of Law. “Shell was both a driver of that culture and one of the finest embodiments of that culture.”

“He understood that the bar exam was unlike a law school exam, a law school writing course or an experiential exam. He understood early on that our students could all pass the exam and that as a law school we needed only to demystify it for them,” explained Bretschneider.

BAR EXAM PREP – A SIGNATURE CONTRIBUTION

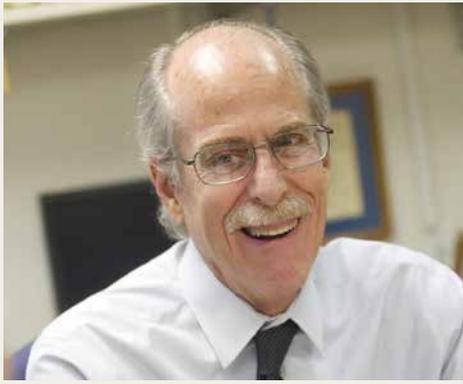
Professor Shellenberger was a pioneer in creating courses and programming to support students as they prepared for the bar exam, said Kristen Murray, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of Law. “We’ve had many iterations of bar prep coursework, and the mainstay of bar exam preparation, now the Survey of Legal Topics, was a class he both taught and helped to craft.”

SHAPING PRACTICE-READY PROFESSIONALS

Shellenberger embodied the lived experience of lawyers-in-the-making by providing a hands-on approach that helped students find their confidence and realize their potential as future lawyers.



One of his most popular courses, Criminal Procedure II (Crim Pro 2), epitomized his commitment to experiential learning. This simulation course, which filled up within minutes of registration opening, became a striking departure from traditional legal education.



“Shell understood that simulation courses that provided opportunities for students to engage in the practice of law in mock settings allowed students a chance to really believe in themselves and see that they were going to be fabulous lawyers,” said Bretschneider.

Professor Kathy Mandelbaum, who sat in the office next to Shellenberger added, “Shell believed in a growth mindset...he believed that making mistakes and experiencing what some would view as failures were just opportunities for growth in the long run.”

His passing creates an immeasurable void. Femenia observed, “His absence is still very evident at faculty meetings because he would make contributions every single time. It is hard to lose such a central member of a community, and that absence is going to be felt for a very long time.”

Bartow reflected, “When you make a difference to a whole lot of people, those people are going to remember you forever.” ■

Murray noted, “I feel saddest for the students who didn’t know him and who won’t get to learn from him. He was a giant, and there is a giant hole in our hearts because he’s gone.”

The Next Chapter — the Transition to NextGen

Professor Shellenberger’s legacy will always be his steadfast commitment to students and their preparation for the bar exam. His passing comes as the profession undergoes significant transformation with the development of the NextGen Bar Exam.

Law school graduates currently take the Uniform Bar Exam to gain initial licensure in Pennsylvania and in most other states and U.S. territories. In 2026, NextGen will begin to replace it, though Pennsylvania has yet to announce when it will transition to this new exam. States have until 2028 to make the change.

NextGen is designed to test a broad range of foundational concepts and principles: civil procedure, contract law, evidence, torts, business associations, constitutional law, criminal law and real property. Starting in July 2028, family law will be added to the list of foundational concepts and principles tested.

NextGen test takers will also be expected to demonstrate more foundational lawyering skills in legal research, legal writing, issue spotting and analysis, investigation and evaluation, client counseling and advising, negotiation and dispute resolution, and client relationship and management.

Currently, a working group of Temple Law administrators, chaired by Director of the Law Library and Associate Professor of Law Gabriela Femenia, is “defining bar pass culture to sustain a 90% and above pass rate.” Information from schools with “robust bar pass cultures and improved outcomes, such as Duquesne University,” helped inform this definition.

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of Law Kristen Murray, a group member, explained, “The goal is to ensure all members of the law school community — students, faculty and staff — contribute to student success in taking the bar exam.” Assistant Dean for Students and Strategic Initiatives Jen Bretschneider and Edward D. Ohlbaum Endowed Term Professor of Law and Director of Advocacy Programs Jules Epstein are also group members.

Femenia reported the group conducted a curriculum survey aimed at adjusting course descriptions to enable more informed course selection decision-making. “We want to ensure students understand how their course selections align with material being assessed in the NextGen bar exam,” said Murray.

Not to be overlooked is the diversity of Temple Law’s student population, from young parents to those working full time. As Murray explained, “We have tried hard to make sure our students have the support that we know they are likely to need. ...Our approach to bar preparation tries to offer different approaches for different needs, and I think that’s why we have been successful so far.”