

Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law

Volume 47
Issue 4 October 2014

Article 1

2014

In Memoriam: Professor Harold G. Maier

Journal Editor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.law.vanderbilt.edu/vjtl>



Part of the [International Law Commons](#), and the [Transnational Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Journal Editor, In Memoriam: Professor Harold G. Maier, 47 *Vanderbilt Law Review* 901 (2021)

Available at: <https://scholarship.law.vanderbilt.edu/vjtl/vol47/iss4/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Vanderbilt Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law by an authorized editor of Scholarship@Vanderbilt Law. For more information, please contact mark.j.williams@vanderbilt.edu.



In Memoriam: Professor Harold G. Maier



Harold G. (Hal) Maier, a renowned scholar of international law and founder of the *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, died August 24 following a long illness. Professor Maier spent his entire academic career at Vanderbilt Law School. He was 77.

Maier was an internationally recognized authority on the application of U.S. regulatory legislation to foreign business activity. Over the course of his distinguished career, he worked on advanced research at the Brookings Institution and the Max-Planck Institute in Munich, Germany, and was a visiting professor at Pepperdine University, the University of Pennsylvania, George Washington University, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Georgia. He served on the editorial boards of the *American Journal of International Law* and the *American Journal of Comparative Law*. In 1983-84, he was counselor on international law to the Office of the Legal Adviser at the U.S. Department of State, and on several occasions he testified before congressional committees and as an expert witness in domestic courts.

Maier founded the student-edited *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* in 1967 and served as its faculty adviser until his retirement in 2005. He was appointed the David Daniels Allen Distinguished Professor of Law in 1988. He was a co-author of *Public*

International Law in a Nutshell (with Thomas Buergenthal, West Publishing) and dozens of journal articles and book chapters, some written in German, which he spoke fluently.

Hired in 1965 to develop Vanderbilt's international law program, Maier sought to establish a program to train students interested in an international legal practice and to enable scholarship in international legal studies that would also appeal to a broader base of students. "Only a program that combined a full curriculum, diverse faculty members, and broad-based student activities could accomplish all three goals," he wrote in a 1992 article for the *Vanderbilt Lawyer* magazine. With few resources other than his formidable intellect and force of will, Maier helped form the student International Law Society as well the *Journal of Transnational Law* and used these early successes to establish a firm foundation for future growth of international studies at Vanderbilt. During his four-decade career, he worked with six deans to build and support a thriving program while also serving the university as chair of the faculty senate, on two provost search committees, and on the law school's faculty appointment committee.

Maier was beloved for his pointed and erudite sense of humor. During his tenure as faculty senate chair, he communicated with his colleagues by publishing regular installments of "Thoughts of Chairman Maier." His office featured a stuffed vulture on a wooden perch from which hung a sign that read "brooding omnipresence"—an ironic reference to a famous 1917 Supreme Court dissent by Oliver Wendell Holmes to the majority opinion in *Southern Pacific v. Jensen*. Holmes had written: "The common law is not a brooding omnipresence in the sky, but the articulate voice of some sovereign or quasi-sovereign that can be identified."

A prolific scholar, Maier's work in the field of international law, international civil litigation and conflict of laws gained a global audience. "Long before there was a critical legal studies movement, Hal was thinking about how law was socially constructed," said Tom McCoy, Vanderbilt Law professor emeritus. "He tended to gravitate toward subjects that were developing or unsettled. The study of international law was relatively new at the time he went into academia, and he also focused on conflict of laws, which is a collection of unsolved problems."

In addition to being a revered teacher, Maier was an influential participant in many historic events. He served as a consultant to the Secretary of the Army on the Panama Canal Treaty negotiations and as an expert witness for the federal government in civil litigation resulting from the Mariel boatlift of Cuban refugees in 1980. In 2000, he testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee on behalf of former U.S. World War II POWs seeking to bring legal action against Japanese corporations, claiming they had been used as slave labor while prisoners. He also testified before a congressional committee

regarding emergency presidential controls on international economic transactions.

Maier earned both his undergraduate and law degrees at the University of Cincinnati, graduating from law school Order of the Coif and serving as editor in chief of the *Cincinnati Law Review*. He also earned an LL.M. at the University of Michigan.
