

REMARKS OF JEROME J. SHESTACK

Thank you. I'm sorry I can't be with you tonight, but I feel that I am here in heart and spirit sharing with you this festive evening.

An experienced observer once advised me of two speeches one can give on receiving an award -- a short speech and a long one -- the short one says "thank you." The long one says "Thank you very much." (PAUSE).

Receiving this award named after Louis Sohn is especially meaningful to me. I took the first course that Louis Sohn gave as a young instructor at Harvard Law School. The course was about the new United Nations and its promise of a peaceful and just world. Later, Professor Sohn became the Academic who did the most in our time to clarify principles of public international law, to enhance them, and to establish them as universal law. And, of course, we remember his distinguished service as chair of this Section.

But Harvard was not the first time I met Louis Sohn. The first time was April 25, 1945, when 51 nations assembled in this very city to form the new United Nations. I was then a young ensign on the Aircraft Carrier Ticonderoga. A few months earlier, we were struck by Kamikaze planes. We lost more than 200 men and nearly sunk. But we limped back to the States for repairs. April 25th was our last day in Frisco before returning to the war against Japan. I very much wanted to be at the Conference. So that morning, I went from one staff office to another, trying to get a ticket to the Conference. But, all to no avail.

Feeling frustrated, I went to the Post Office in the Veterans Building adjoining the Opera House where the Conference would meet. I bought a dozen first day covers and sat down in the lobby to address the envelopes. Next to me sat an elderly gentleman. Seeing my first day covers,

he asked me where he could buy some, and I gave him three of mine. He identified himself as a Professor. He was waiting for the Conference doors to open and I recall his calling the new U.N. “a brave new world.”

From time to time, an attractive French-speaking woman and a young man with a noticeable Polish accent brought the Professor papers to sign. He introduced them as Mercedes and Louis and I told them how much I wanted to be at the Conference.

The time soon arrived when the Conference doors were to open and Mercedes and Louis returned to escort the Professor to the Conference.

Suddenly, Mercedes said “Sir, don’t you need a Naval Aide for the Conference?” The Professor blinked, chuckled, and said, “Indeed, I do.” And he turned to me and said “How would you like to be my Naval Aide for today?” I didn’t know just who I was to be a Naval Aide for. But I was wise

enough to say “Yes Sir.” On our way to the Conference, I learned that I was the Naval Aide for Judge Manly Hudson of the World Court, and Senior U.S. Diplomat at the Conference. Mercedes was his confidential secretary. The young diplomat assisting Judge Hudson was Louis Sohn.

As Naval Aide to U.S. Senior Delegate, I was able to get into the Conference without a ticket. It was an exhilarating day. I knew what was involved in winning the war. But here I saw how we would win the peace.

So... I can claim that serving as Naval Aide to the Senior U.S. Diplomat was my very first contribution to public international law -- even if it was by happenstance.

In the years that followed, I was fortunate in achieving human rights and international law on many fronts.

All of my achievements were accomplished only with the help, encouragement and support of many others -- and particularly with leaders of this Section. So I happily share with them the tribute you have given me tonight!

And tonight -- tonight, I will dream that the "brave new world" that Manly Hubson and Louis Sohn envisioned 65 years ago will at last come into being. And all of us will then pay tribute to peace and to justice -- secure and enduring.

Thank you again, and enjoy the evening.