

Greenbaums Endow Visiting Professorship for Israeli Scholars

David R. Greenbaum, '76, and his wife Laureine have endowed the David and Laureine Greenbaum Distinguished Visiting Professorship, which will enable a legal scholar from Israel to visit the Law School for at least a quarter each year, teaching classes and interacting with the Law



Laureine and David Greenbaum

School's faculty and students, as well as lecturing in the College of the University of Chicago and being available to the university community as a whole for both intellectual and cultural exchange.

The gift reflects the Greenbaums' commitment to Israel and its ideals, it connects strongly to Mr. Greenbaum's family history, and it bespeaks his appreciation for the opportunities that his education at the Law School provided for him. The Greenbaums are active leaders at the national and local levels of the Jewish National Fund, a 111-year-old organization that is today a global environmental leader, having planted more than 250 million trees and created more than 1,000 parks within Israel and having undertaken water reclamation projects that account for a 12 percent increase in Israel's water supply. For their extensive service to the JNF, the Greenbaums were honored with the organization's prestigious Tree of Life award in 2011. Previous recipients of the award include Colin Powell and Al Gore.

Mr. Greenbaum's parents escaped from Nazi Germany during the Second World War. "I'm a first-generation American," he says, "and I never take for granted the political, economic, and religious freedoms we enjoy here. I'm also proud of all that Israel has accomplished, as what is currently the only true democracy in the Middle East and as one of the world's most dynamic and entrepreneurial economies. I'm glad that this professorship will provide an opportunity for University of Chicago students and others to learn more about Israel and its successful rule of law and for each year's Israeli visitor to perhaps return home with a bit of the University of Chicago magic."

A president of the New York Division of Vornado Realty Trust, Mr. Greenbaum oversees a 28-million-square-foot portfolio of office, retail, and residential assets, some \$15-plus billion dollars in real estate investments. He says

his mother's experience influenced his career path: "My mother's home in Heidelberg was appropriated during the war, and she came to the United States with practically nothing. After the war, when her childhood home in Germany was returned to her, I still remember her saying to me that you can lose a lot in life, but somehow they cannot take real estate from you."

At the Law School, Mr. Greenbaum was powerfully influenced by Professor Walter Blum, whose specialty was taxation. "Walter Blum was my hero—an unbelievably great teacher who was a master of the Socratic method," he says. "He became my mentor at the Law School. I took every course he offered. He brought out the best in me and inspired me to become a tax lawyer."

After law school, Mr. Greenbaum joined Weil Gotshal & Manges as a tax lawyer, specializing in real estate issues. A real estate boom was newly underway, and Greenbaum worked with many of the young men—including Donald Trump, Richard Fisher, Larry Silverstein, and Bernard Mendik—who would come to shape New York's skyline. In 1982 he joined Mendik's real estate business, eventually becoming its president, and he led the process by which that firm was merged into Vornado in 1997.

In 2010, Mr. Greenbaum's corporate and civic leadership was recognized with the New York Real Estate Board's Mendik Lifetime Achievement Award. Among his civic contributions, he is a member of the Citizens' Budget Commission, which advises the governments of New York City and New York State on fiscal matters, and he is a director of several public-private partnerships that aim to insure the current and future vitality of New York City, including the Times Square Alliance, the Grand Central Partnership, and the Penn Plaza Business Improvement District.

Mr. Greenbaum says the gift he and his wife have given to the Law School is just one way of repaying the debt he feels. "The intellectual life of the Law School startled me when I first arrived there," he recalls. "I remember being in class with a brand-new professor named Richard Epstein, and then leaving the class with no idea what he had been saying—but knowing that it was important and I had better figure it out. I always say that in one sense the Law School didn't teach me anything, and at the same time it taught me everything that matters—how to evaluate problems, how to think systematically, and how to express myself orally and in writing, to name just a few. The Law School has been instrumental in everything I have accomplished, and I am very pleased to join with my wife in making this gift."