

Alumni Remarks
75th Anniversary
Brian Neff, F'07

Ambassador Shairoth, Dean Bosworth, Fletcher family. It goes without saying that I feel deeply privileged to be addressing our gathering here as a recent Fletcher graduate, to help celebrate the realization of Austin Fletcher's vision of a school that would provide, in his words, "practical service in a disordered world."

The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy emerged during the birthpangs of a new international order. In an internal 1935 memo that probably hasn't seen the light of day in decades, one that reflected on the school's tentative first years of operation, Fletcher's first Joint Advisory Committee wrote the following:

"Militant imperialism, power diplomacy, wars, and rumors of wars have brought international relationships to the fore... [ours is] a world so closely knit together by economic bonds and facile means of communication [that] the dispassionate analysis of the mutual relations of states [at new The Fletcher School] is likely to assist materially in discovering whatever practicable solutions there may be for crises arising in the community of nations."

Again, this was 1935 – and I think you'd agree that this first advisory body hardly could have envisioned how much closer-knit our world is today, how much more facile – lightning facile! – our own means of communication. (Back then, of course, students had to send telegraphs out to announce when there was pizza in the Goddard Lounge.) What's more, I believe that Founding Dean Harold Hoskins and Fletcher's earliest faculty would be dazzled by how exuberant Fletcher students are today – we study international affairs not solely with the sober heads of "dispassionate analysts" but more than ever with the unrelenting passion of activists, of advocates, of entrepreneurs. You can almost watch this evolution of spirit unfold, if you make your way through the musty boxes of photos at the Tufts archives year by year, folder by folder.

For me, it was impossible to come to a storied institution like Fletcher without feeling a little intoxicated that I was being invited into something that really *mattered* – this was a place that not only had provided generations of leaders with a haven for intellectual inquiry, but it was also one that had directly influenced the unfolding of the twentieth century. Once I got over the hump of insecurity that besets all first year students (also known as: The "I'm Totally the Exception that Proves that the Admissions Office Doesn't Make Mistakes" Syndrome), I began to take a really keen interest in the history of this place. In other words, the more I felt I truly belonged here, the more I wanted to know what exactly it was I belonged to.

Problem was that Fletcher's history was mostly hidden away – presumably in archives somewhere, but certainly not a part of our daily lives. Many students could tell you that our school grew out of a million dollar bequest by Austin Fletcher, but we couldn't tell you much else. For instance: Who exactly was this Charles Francis Adams guy and why are all these lectures named after him? If I remember correctly, I had to go to Professor Henrikson for the answer to that one – he was actually longtime Chairman of the Fletcher Board of Visitors and a

great-great-great grandson of second U.S. President John Adams. For that matter, who exactly was Austin Barclay Fletcher, besides a really generous guy? Where did all our traditions come from – Culture Nights, Follies, Procrastination? Usually the answers to these questions resided in a cloud of rumor and speculation. Every so often you'd hear someone ask, "Is it really true that the Dean's Office was *bombed* in the seventies?" It was – in 1971, in a tragic protest to Fletcher's connections to the Vietnam War. And while we're on Fletcher trivia: Did you know we used to have regular sit-down dinners as a student body? We did – for the first few decades, at least, and by most accounts, this was the only window of time when women were "officially" allowed to hang out in the men's dormitory, Wilson House. When it came to Fletcher's history, it was like we were all playing the telephone game writ large – factoids ricocheting from conversation to conversation becoming more muddled along the journey.

With all this in mind, when it came time to present a traditional parting Gift to the school, as all graduating classes do, the Class of 2007 raised a record-shattering \$7,000 and committed these funds to showcasing the story and spirit of The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in photographs and documents, and in the process transforming the previously sterile walls of our beautiful facilities into a far warmer and more welcoming "home."

So it is with incredible pride, on the 75th anniversary of the first Convocation, that I officially "unveil" the Class of 2007 Archival Exhibit. Our idea was to make a truly lasting contribution that would benefit the entire Fletcher family for years to come – not just current faculty, staff, and students but prospective applicants looking to get a flavor of this great school's legacy, alumni returning for a visit, distinguished guests who pass through these halls. Incidentally, I've already been heartened to learn that at least one alum who returned for his 50th reunion in September did a double take and smiled broadly when he recognized himself on the wall.

The display has been designed strategically so that new images easily can be swapped in for the present ones, to keep the Exhibit aesthetically varied and fresh down the line. And to supplement the necessarily succinct captions will be a printed guide that offers more detailed backstory to many of the images of particular historical significance.

All this comes no doubt to the infinite relief of Dean Sheehan, who has been the staunchest of supporters from Day One, and who no doubt harbored some private, untold horror that he gave me the go ahead to start drilling and hammering things into the walls! And it no doubt comes to the gratification of Anne Sauer, our University Archivist, and her colleague at the Tisch Digital Collections and Archives Susanne Belovari, who generously offered their own and their staff's help in scanning, cropping and sizing the images, ordering the frames and label placards. A heartfelt thanks to them, and also to Sarah Strong, Student Affairs Administrator, for all her input and logistical help, and to the entire office of Alumni and Development Relations, and to rest of the Class Gift Committee.

But the most profound appreciation of all goes to Paula Tognarelli, the Executive Director of the Griffin Museum of Photography up the road in Winchester. Having spent months in the archives to select what I thought was a good pictorial cross-section of Fletcher's past, that captured both the intensity and effervescence of our community, I had a minor panic attack when I remembered that I routinely have trouble hanging pictures in my own apartment. Perhaps Paula sensed the desperation in my voice, because she donated – pro bono! – her curatorial and installation expertise, her aesthetic suggestions, along with several long

stretches of designing, measuring, and re-measuring, to produce the museum-quality galleries that you see. She's here today, and I wanted to recognize her talents publicly and offer a donation to the Griffin Museum to support their beautiful work and the work of local photographers.

I also just have to say that Paula is such a wonderful person and I enjoyed sharing the time with her on this project.

The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy is undergoing an unprecedented expansion today: new degree programs, expanding course offerings, rising enrollment rates. Times of expansion necessarily bring anxiety as well as excitement, as the uncertainty of untested ventures can tend to overshadow the triumphs and traditions of all that's come before. On behalf of the entire Class of 2007, I hope that this Archival Exhibit celebrates where we've come from – pays a deep respect to memory, as Professor Perry expressed far more eloquently than I could have – and sparks widespread fascination with the seventy-five year history of this pathbreaking institution.

Look carefully at the rows of books on the shelf behind Leo Gross, famed international law professor and one of the so-called "Four Horsemen" of a previous era's faculty, and you get an almost voyeuristic flavor for the challenges he and his students were grappling with at the time. Examine the snapshot of a 1976 bulletin board and you see how prominently apartheid stood in the minds of students then. Appreciate that at a time when very few women could pursue higher education, about 20% of Fletcher's inaugural class – by design – was female. And most of all, relive the days when students smoked pipes in class. It's all up there, as a living record of Austin Barclay Fletcher's vision realized.

Thank you very much and Happy Seventy-Fifth!

Brian Neff, F'07, conceived and curated the Class of 2007 Archival Exhibit at The Fletcher School.