

# THE UCLAW MUSICAL

## *Introduction: UCLA School of Law, 1987–1990*

GEORGE ABELE\*

I had never been to Los Angeles before arriving for my first day of law school at UCLA. I knew no one. The bulletin board in the school hallway contained a flyer for auditions in a musical written and directed by Professor Kenneth Graham, and performed by law students. “What a great way to meet my classmates,” I thought. A second thought crossed my mind as well: “What a great way to embarrass myself in front of the entire student body.” Singing was not my strong suit. Or any suit at all, for that matter.

I sought out Professor Graham. “I’d like to be in the musical,” I said, “but I can’t sing.” “Anyone can sing,” he encouraged me. “You don’t have to be a Broadway star.” Practicing my lawyer-to-be skills, I negotiated a non-singing role, the only one in the production. I played a law professor who provided a narration for the performance, to fill in the storyline between the musical numbers.

We rehearsed for months, and I found the camaraderie I was looking for. Professor Graham was as friendly and as patient as one could be, gently

---

\* President, California Supreme Court Historical Society; partner, Employment Law Department, Paul Hastings, Los Angeles. For further information, see the Editor-in-Chief’s introduction on page 1 of this volume: 11 CAL. LEGAL HIST. 1 (2016).



GEORGE ABELE  
ON STAGE,  
FEBRUARY 1988.

*Courtesy  
Kenneth Graham*

guiding us through the storyline and lyrics he had written to Cole Porter songs. Showtime was upon us before we knew it, and we performed in front of much of the student body and faculty. I recall when I stepped out on stage to open the show, I heard a fellow classmate call out from the audience, “Let’s go Abele!” Momentarily distracted, I nearly forgot my lines, but managed to survive the stage fright. We carried off the show without a hitch.

At the beginning of second year, I had the opportunity to take Evidence with Professor Graham. Recalling the bond we had forged in the play, I registered, expecting, perhaps, some lenient treatment when it came to the challenges I had heard Evidence class could present. As I settled into my seat toward the back of the class on the first day, Professor Graham began, “What evidence is admissible? Let’s go, Mr. Abele!” Momentarily distracted, I completely forgot my lines.

★ ★ ★