

Resolution on the retirement of
Pierre-Henri Laurent

Adopted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Pierre-Henri Laurent was, as it were, born to the academic purple. His father was an eminent Belgian historian, who died during the Resistance; his mother was a distinguished teacher and linguist. Pierre and his older sister were brought as children to the United States by their mother when the Second World War broke out.

When Pierre first went to college at Colgate, he thought he would like to be a diplomat: the thought of Pierre being diplomatic does give a person pause. Upon graduation Pierre spent three years in the US Air Force, ferrying atomic bombs around the periphery of the Soviet Union. Chastened by that real-life Dr. Strangelove experience he returned to get a PhD in history from Boston University, and finally discovered his true vocation as an academic historian. In the peripatetic fashion of the 1960's Pierre taught at a number of places, Sweet Briar College, Northwestern University, the University of Wisconsin at Madison and Tulane University, where, among other feats, he coached Newt Gingrich to a doctorate in history before finally alighting at Tufts in 1970. Back in those days, the hiring of new faculty was still pretty much a matter of agreement between a departmental chair and the Dean of Faculty, unencumbered with the hurdles that exist today.

Pierre's scholarly interests have been centered on the post World War II history of Europe and specifically on the creation of the institutions created after the horrors of the Second Thirty Years War to avert the possibility of a recurrence. The beginning of the European Union came as the war was ending, in a situation where a small country such as Belgium was able to play a large and influential role by imaginative ideas and an ability to provide an example of a country willing to share its sovereignty in order to bolster its welfare and find a higher form of security in a higher European unity. For forty years now Pierre has been a prolific scholar and teacher on the subject of the new Europe. He has published almost fifty articles in a variety of journals and book collections, has himself edited five books, and has contributed in the weekly and daily press to educate the public about the great matters of the moment. He has been called upon to make presentations at a wide variety of venues, from Beijing to Strasbourg to Houston, Texas, invited to meetings at the highest level of academic and policy considerations.

The unstinting efforts of Pierre over the last thirty-three years, a third of a century, have contributed in a major way to the progress of the Arts and Sciences component of Tufts University. He has been one of those people immediately recognized by the rest of the faculty simply as "Pierre"; further identification would be superfluous. Pierre is a person who has never refused when asked to serve in any capacity, and he has often been asked, elected, dragooned because of the energy, the unfailing collegiality, the high professional capacity Pierre has always demonstrated. There has been no area of faculty governance, scarcely indeed a faculty committee, where Pierre has not played a leadership role. He has served on the Tenure and Promotion Committee, for many years he chaired the Committee of Foreign Programs, he was one of the two individuals most important in the creation of the International Relations Program, which he has also chaired. He had an important and direct role in the elaboration of Tufts University European Center at Talloires. He has chaired the Experimental College Board. The confidence of the faculty in Pierre's integrity has been demonstrated by his

election to the Grievance Committee and his action as its Ombudsman last year. Pierre has been indefatigable in his devotion to the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors and in arguing the importance of the AAUP as a vehicle for the expression of faculty concerns. He has chaired and co-chaired the Educational Policy Committee at critical moments in the development of policy and curricular concerns. Pierre has done his stint as well as Chair of the History Department, winning the gratitude of its members. Pierre has played a crucial role in introducing new History faculty to Tufts University.

Pierre has also been very visible outside of Tufts. He has chaired the American Historical Association's Program Committee. Almost annually, Pierre has been invited to attend meetings to discuss the history and future of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He has been the Fulbright Professor of International Affairs at the College of Europe in Bruges. The European Community Studies Association conferred on him its Meritorious Service Award for the wide range of the services Pierre has conferred on his colleagues. He has also given his time and his unfailing kindness to work mentoring with men in the Federal prison system and as a volunteer hospice worker.

Not the least of his services to the University and the profession has been Pierre's role as teacher, mentor, example and guide for generations of Tufts graduates. The sharpness of minds of his students has been honed over the years by the hard work he requires of them to understand his sentence structure. Pierre has been the perennial winner of the Marcel Proust Prize for What Seem to be Interminable Sentences But Really Are Not. Colleagues at faculty meeting have had the same pleasurable exercise. Many of Pierre's students have themselves gone to careers in the academy and business and have remained in touch with him, with fond memories of his enthusiasm for teaching and very genuine interest in the person he is talking with.

Pierre's success in life and academia cannot be understood without reference to his wife, Virginia Laurent, who has not only facilitated his success but has also put up with his foibles and often made him presentable to the rest of the world for the better part of 45 years: Ginny's beauty belies the number. When Pierre brings business home with him, she has always been a creative partner. She has kept him mentally adroit in book clubs and theater visits to New York and physically fit by arduous walks in mountainous climes. Pierre dotes on their four children and even more on their seven grandchildren. Theirs is indeed a happy family.

Ginny is doubtless happy that Pierre finds other people to join in his passion for sports. A life-long Yankee fan, whenever they come to Boston to humiliate the Red Sox Pierre shares the tickets he can find with those of his friends who also know the secret Masonic handshake of Yankee fans resident in Boston. In compensation for that he suffers for the Celtics.

For some thirty years Pierre, as Marshall of the Faculty, has been the first faculty member entering students at Matriculation have met and the last in their undergraduate career. What a wonderful introduction for them to our University! How it will be missed! How it will be remembered!

On behalf of the committee, I move that this resolution on the retirement of Pierre-Henri Laurent be spread on the permanent record of this faculty and that a copy of it be sent to Pierre-Henri.