

KARL JORDA ONCE BELIEVED HE WAS DESTINED TO EKE OUT A LIVING AS A FARMER ON A SMALL PLOT OF LAND WITH POOR SOIL. BORN IN 1929, JORDA GREW UP IN A LITTLE VILLAGE CALLED DEUTSCH BRODEK, IN THE MORAVIA PROVINCE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. The village had a market place, a church and a school, but the landscape was mostly farmhouses and fields. There was no electricity and no transportation. Jorda had to walk to school, regardless of rain or snow. He lived with his family in a house with one room, and they used a stove for cooking, baking, and heating. His family raised cattle and pigs in the stables. As the oldest child, he believed his fate was to follow his ancestors in subsistence farming. Growing up in this environment, Jorda never expected he would board a troopship and come to America to study at a university in Montana. And he certainly never expected he

Germany. “Penniless and stateless, my family and I were deported to Germany, which was a distant country to me,” Jorda says. “I was not a German; I was Sudeten German or Austrian. My parents grew up as Austrians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Germany didn’t mean anything to me. We were expelled from Czechoslovakia and all we could bring along was just one suitcase per person. We arrived in Germany penniless and stateless.”

As a displaced person, Jorda might have lost his national identity, but he worked hard at school and traveled frequently to explore his personal identity. He had the chance to attend a German Gymnasium, a classical secondary school that qualified graduates to admission to a university, and study a variety of subjects, including science, math, history, geography, and five languages—German, English, French, Latin, and Ancient

Jorda's American

would later pursue a distinguished career as a lawyer and law professor and become one of the foremost authorities in intellectual property law.

Soft-spoken and unassuming, Jorda recalls his journey from Moravia to America with a voice brimming with gratitude and attributes much of his success to luck and having a sense of audacity. “I never had to make a decision or plan anything,” he says. “I never had to agonize about pros and cons, yes or no. Opportunities came out of the blue and I just seized them without knowing what I was getting into, and they turned out for the best—I was very lucky in that sense.” But Jorda’s journey also included many hardships, and it is really his positive view of life and his strong work ethic that made him who he is today. Ever since he was a young boy, to a certain extent, Jorda has been creating his own luck.

Jorda started out as low as anyone could be. Living in a German-speaking area of Czechoslovakia, in the Sudetenland, as part of the ethnic German minority, Jorda and his family were expelled from their home in Deutsch Brodek to Germany at the end of the WWII. Jorda was seventeen. Like millions of ethnic Germans from Eastern European countries, he and his family were packed into a cattle wagon and transported to

Greek. Growing up as an adolescent, Jorda traveled and wandered around Germany. His mother came to call him a gypsy. “I would hop on to my bike and disappear for three weeks,” Jorda says. “I had an irresistible urge to get out and travel, staying at youth hostels. I was cruising around all over Germany and into the wild blue yonder on my bike.” Many years later, with this same spirit, he would travel from Great Falls, MT to upstate New York and spend his first summer in America hitchhiking from New York City to Washington, D.C. and then back to Montana.

It was this sense of adventure and boldness that led Jorda to America, a place he had heard little about when he was in Germany. The appealing opportunity to go to America to study came out of almost nowhere. Every year, through an externship program, a valedictorian from St. Olaf’s College in Minnesota would come to the Gymnasium that Jorda was attending and teach the students English. Jorda was an excellent student, graduating from the school with honors, and the American student teacher took the initiative to arrange a scholarship for Jorda through an international humanitarian agency called Catholic Relief Services. While he was waiting for the scholarship to come through, Jorda studied at the



Journey



University of Frankfurt and at the time he did not actually think much of the scholarship because it seemed like a pipe dream. But if there was ever a critical moment that luck took part in Jorda's success, it was when he received the full scholarship to study at the University of Great Falls in Montana and along with it, contrary to his expectation of receiving a one-year student visa, an immigration visa that gave him permanent residence in the United States. Unbeknownst to him, he fell under a special American immigration quota for 140,000 displaced Germans from Eastern countries. Somehow, all of a sudden, he was heading towards another country again.

The trip took ten days. It was 1951 and Jorda was 22 years old. American soldiers were returning home and they brought immigrants along with them. Since the trip was free, the immigrants were put to work. In the troopship, on the way from Bremen, Germany to New York City, Jorda worked as a supervisor in the "baby kitchen," the dining room for children and babies. He was feeling adventurous, but at the same time, he had no idea what America was going to be like. He could not visualize how things were going to work out, nor could he fathom what this experience would mean.

In early December, Jorda arrived in New York City, again penniless and stateless. His passport stated that he was of German nationality, but did not have German citizenship; he would remain stateless until he obtained U.S. citizenship five years later. Jorda was taken on a car ride straight from the harbor to Grand Central Station, and he was then given six dollars for his three-day train ride via Chicago to Montana. With one suitcase and what remained of six dollars, Jorda arrived at the University of Great Falls, a Catholic university run by the Sisters of Charity of Providence. He took up a part-time job as a delivery and clean-up boy at a shop that sold and repaired typewriters. He worked hard to improve his English, and the

diverse study he had at the Gymnasium influenced him to continue to select a wide variety of subjects to broaden his education. Jorda was an exceptional student, graduating *summa cum laude*, and the Sisters, who had studied at the University of Notre Dame, steered him towards graduate school and insisted that he continue his studies at Notre Dame, where he would complete a master's degree in chemistry. In graduate school, he worked as a night watchman at a residence hall and taught a course in German language and literature to college students.

At the time, the idea of becoming a lawyer never crossed his mind; on campus, he passed by the law school building frequently but the building meant nothing to him. Unlike most people around him who had specific plans and goals, Jorda was simply grateful being an "eternal student" because no one in his family had been to college. Eventually, the idea of law school came to him as a suggestion from two students in his German class. They were headed to law school after graduation and suggested Jorda to come along. And so, on a whim, he went to the dean of the law school and, less than half an hour later, he came out of the office with a sheet of paper stating that he was admitted into law school with a full scholarship for three years. Jorda did not know much about the law profession, but he was relishing this opportunity to go on studying.

While Jorda was in law school, he met the woman he would eventually marry. His wife, Alice, his "Sweet Swiss Miss," came from Switzerland and her family sent her to Indiana, coincidentally also in 1951. A doctor's family took her in. When Jorda was at Notre Dame, she was attending nursing school at St. Mary's. They met through a friend, and they immediately fell in love and tied the knot in 1956. They have been married for fifty-two years and have four children and five grandchildren. When his first child was born, Jorda was taking final law

school examinations. In 1958, they went back to Germany and Switzerland for the first time, to visit parents and siblings. During his first seven years in the United States, everything happened rather unexpectedly, but he is thankful for all that had happened and would frequently utter the phrase: “Only in America, only in America.”

The discovery of patent law as his future vocation did not come about in any anticipated manner either. “Becoming a patent attorney was a total accident,” Jorda says. “I didn’t even know that such a job existed. I graduated from law school and I had never heard of patents before.” Jorda had applied for a job in the legal department of Miles Laboratories (now Bayer), in Elkhart, IN, but all positions had been filled. But there was an opening in the patent department. “When I heard about the opening, I probably asked ‘What’s a patent department and what’s a patent?’” Jorda says. “It seems that, for most of my life, I just fell into things. Patent law just fell into my lap, most like-

people in his department. “I wanted to know about the problems they were facing in dealing with inventors and patent office examiners,” Jorda says. By the 1970s, Jorda was successfully heading a large operation—the company was ranked second in the world in terms of patent activity in the chemical/pharmaceutical industry.

From time to time, during these many years as a patent attorney in America, Jorda would become nostalgic about the times in Europe. “I was once on a business trip with a colleague from Ciga-Geigy, and he told me he was going to get bees after returning home. Boy, when he said that, it hit me, so hard, that I went out and also bought beehives right away.” After that, Jorda became an avid beekeeper. “Bees are such fascinating creatures,” he says. “They have been around for millions of years and they know how to survive. In the winter-time, they can maintain heat in the hive; in the summer, they know how to cool it down. And beekeepers don’t have arthritis

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ly because a lawyer with a technical background was very rare back then. I accepted the position, and it just became a perfect fit. Being a patent attorney was just meant to be my career, and the best career possible.”

From that point on, Jorda would gain over thirty years of experience in corporate practice in intellectual property and licensing. He began his job at Miles Laboratories, writing patent applications, when the United States patent system was still rather uncomplicated. Three years later, he moved on to work at Geigy (later known as Ciba-Geigy and now known as Novartis, a leading pharmaceutical company). When he first arrived at Geigy, in Ardsley, NY, there was only person working in the patent department—the head of the department, a man from Switzerland with a PhD in chemistry who three years later decided to return to Switzerland. The position of chief intellectual property counsel and director fell into Jorda’s lap. With only six years of work experience, Jorda at first did not feel ready to run a patent operation as a director. But over the next twenty-six years, Jorda expanded the intellectual property department, hiring more people, and the company became more patent-conscious as a pharmaceutical company. Although he was in an administrative and management position, Jorda continued to do patent prosecution work because he wanted to stay intimately involved with the daily work of

because of the therapeutic substance in bee venom.” Jorda swore he would never be without bees, but he was eventually forced to give up his favorite hobby. “Bears just love honey too much and would always end up finding the beehives. One time I came out, it looked like a tornado hit the beehives. I didn’t go back into beekeeping because I knew it would be so much more heartbreaking if the bears kept coming back and destroying the beehives.”

In 1989, Jorda received a phone call out of the blue from Homer Blair, Pierce Law’s first David Rines Professor of Intellectual Property Law and Industrial Innovation and the Germeshausen Center’s first director. Jorda knew him from professional meetings. Blair was retiring, and he asked Jorda if he was interested in succeeding him. “At first, I felt that I was not a professor, and teaching was not for me,” Jorda says. “I was very skeptical, coming from Europe, where becoming a professor was so difficult that I could never have contemplated becoming one. But this was another opportunity that just came along, and perhaps I wasn’t qualified for it in my mind, but I felt I should give it a good try.” Jorda was terrified at the beginning of the first class he taught, but he became more comfortable teaching when he realized that he could pass along all his industrial and operational experience to his students. In many ways, Jorda’s arrival at Pierce Law brought the

school more worldwide recognition. For ten years, from 1989 to 2009, as the second David Rines Professor, Jorda has enjoyed teaching International Property Management and Technology Licensing, courses that students from all around the world have thoroughly enjoyed taking. As the Germeshausen Center's director, he has organized numerous intellectual property conferences and symposiums that draw an international audience of lawyers and administrators. He has given over three hundred talks on intellectual property and licensing topics in more than forty countries. "His travel schedule would challenge a cabinet-level diplomat!" says Pierce Law professor and Jorda's good friend William Hennessey JD '86. "As a matter of fact, he is, indeed, rightly known as Pierce Law's 'roving ambassador.'" Today, Jorda is well known and very much respected in the intellectual property field. "Karl is perhaps the quintessential example of a true professional," said Pierce Law President and Dean John D. Hutson. "He is one of the most well respected and beloved lawyers I have ever met. There are some brilliant lawyers and some nice lawyers, but not many brilliant, nice lawyers. Karl is one of very few. He is a perfect gentleman and an IP icon around the world." Among his many honors, Jorda received the 1996 Jefferson Medal for his exceptional contributions to the United States intellectual property law system. In 2007, Jorda was inducted into the global Intellectual Property Hall of Fame.

Now living in Bow, NH with his wife, Jorda is highly respected and beloved by students and colleagues at Pierce Law. Some students know him as "the trade secret guy." Jorda

is a big proponent of integrating patents with trade secrets, and he strongly emphasizes the use of trade secrets along with patents in his classes. But most students and colleagues know him as a generous and kind man. "Karl goes out of his way to teach, mentor, and nurture the talent with whom he works," says Associate Dean Susan M. Richey. "He is humble with regard to his own accomplishments and generous in his praise of the accomplishments of others. He is a sweetheart." Dawn Buonocore-Atlas JD '95 remembers a time when, as a first-year law student in her second semester, she was at a pay phone right outside of Jorda's office, calling her husband after she found out about her first semester grades. She was crying because she was so surprised and overjoyed that she did well. Jorda had accidentally overheard the conversation in his office, and after she hung up the phone, he came out, hugged her, and turned around and went back in his office. "It was the warmest, kindest gesture," she says. "He knew that a hug was the best thing for me at that moment, and ever since then, I fell in love with the guy."

Jorda has decided to retire in June 2009, and everyone at Pierce Law will surely miss him. These days, when asked where he will go next, Jorda says he has no plans. And perhaps, in light of his remarkable journey from Moravia to America, his reply is not so surprising. Today Jorda proclaims, 'Only in America! Only in America!' with even more conviction. Wherever he is going, the students, alumni and colleagues wish him the very best as he, together with Alice, sets off once again into the wild blue yonder.

Pictured on page 4: 1. Graduation from German Gymnasium, 1950; 2. Before leaving the Sundentenland, 1946; 3. Lecturing in New Delhi, India, 2001; 4. With Homer Blair, 2006, celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Germeshausen Center; 5. First job at Miles Laboratories, 1957; 6. Lecturing at Pierce Law, 1997

Pictured below: 7. First trip home, at Frankfurt Airport with wife, Alice on left, and mother in the background; 8. 50th wedding anniversary, 2006; 9. Jorda clan at Lake Winnepesaukee, 1999; 10. Receiving the Jefferson Medal, 1996

