

The Exacting Business of Legal Translation

THOMAS L. WEST III '90 has a knack for languages that proved to be a notable asset in Law School. Working with his mentor, Professor Daniel Meador, who had written a book on East German law and wanted to stay informed about changes when the Berlin Wall came down, West translated German law review articles, court decisions, and newspaper articles orally for him.

After graduation from Law School, West practiced for five years with Alston & Bird in Atlanta. He soon discovered how difficult it was to get useful legal translations from translators who lack a legal background. Sometimes firms would request translation from English into their language, then end up requesting the original document in English because that would be clearer to them than a half-baked translation. West saw a need and left the practice of law to fill it.

In 1995 he founded Intermark Language Services Corporation, a legal and business translation company located in Chattanooga, Tenn., that serves law firms, financial institutions, and Fortune 500 companies around the world. Most of the work is for clients in Europe. Intermark has three full-time staff members and scores of freelance translators. Altogether,

they have expertise in ten European languages. West is certified to translate from French, Spanish, German, and Dutch to English and speaks six other languages as well. But the key to Intermark's success is the fact that all the translators have legal backgrounds. Many of them are former attorneys.

Legal translation is challenging on several levels. To do a good job translating a legal document from English to French, for instance, you not only have to understand what terms *mean*; you have to know how you would *say* it in French. To be a good legal translator you have to be more than fluent. You need a keen eye for detail and the patience to figure things out because accuracy is crucial. New laws bring new terms to decipher, so a bit of detective work may be required.

West credits his education at the Law School for sharpening skills that have proven to be invaluable in his business. The exams for his courses pushed him to concentrate. "A question could focus on one specific point," he recalls, "and if you weren't really paying attention, you could head off in the wrong direction." The same is true in translation.

In hindsight, he regrets not taking a class



in ancient Roman law. "The legal systems in Europe have their foundations in Justinian law. Although at the time I didn't know where my law career would take me, it turns out that that would have been very useful in my work."

Last year West published the second edition of *The Spanish-English Dictionary of Law and Business* (see *In Print*). The volume includes thousands of essential terms and phrases and complete coverage of terminology used in all 20 Spanish-speaking countries.

—REBECCA BARNES

ROBERT M. TATA was appointed by the governor of Virginia to the Old Dominion University board of visitors for a four-year term. Located in Norfolk, ODU is a public research university with approximately 25,000 students. Tata continues his practice at Hunton & Williams in Virginia Beach. He was recognized by *Best Lawyers 2013* as a Washington, D.C., and Virginia Lawyer of the Year in intellectual property law.

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ROBERT H. COX is assistant director with the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board in Washington, D.C. The PCAOB is a nonprofit corporation established by Congress to oversee the audits of public companies in order to protect the interests of investors and further the public interest in the preparation of informative, accurate and independent audit

reports. The PCAOB also oversees the audits of broker-dealers, including compliance reports filed pursuant to federal securities laws, to promote investor protection. Cox has been at PCAOB since 2011; prior to that he was a partner with Howrey.

SEAN GERTNER reports that representing Point Pleasant Beach post-[Hurricane] Sandy has been a challenge. Even so, he writes, "We are

open for business. Come visit! Marla and I are being kept busy with the ever-growing schedules of our six-year-old, Eva, and three-year-old, Max, but it keeps me young."

UVA Dean of Students **ALLEN GROVES** got the academic year off to a fun start when, with the help of students, he broke the Guinness World Record for most high-fives by an individual in one hour. Students lined up from

one end of the Lawn to the other to participate. They needed 1,739 to break the record and logged in over 2,000. Football coach Mike London tweeted his congratulations, advising Groves, "You may need to see our trainers tomorrow for treatment." Such fun events seem a natural for Groves, who led a UVA version of the Harlem Shake on the Lawn earlier in the year.