

DESTINATION: YUL

LAST AUGUST, PROFESSOR BRIAN F. HAVEL BID ADIEU TO THE VICISSITUDES OF CHICAGO COMMUTING AND MOVED INTO A HIGH-RISE IN DOWNTOWN MONTREAL, A TWO-MINUTE WALK FROM CAMPUS. FORMER DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF LAW AT DEPAUL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW, VICE-CHAIR OF THE EXTERNAL ADVISORY BOARD OF THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AIR AND SPACE LAW AT LEIDEN UNIVERSITY, AND A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF THE EUROPEAN AIR LAW ASSOCIATION SINCE 2005, HAVEL HAS TAKEN OVER AS DIRECTOR OF THE FACULTY'S INSTITUTE OF AIR AND SPACE LAW (IASL).



**BRIAN F.
HAVEL**

How did you become interested in aviation law?

I am not a pilot and I am actually a bit of a nervous flier. My interest was purely academic. I was in search of a topic for my Columbia Law doctoral dissertation and was at an antitrust conference in New York City, where I happened to meet an EU air transport official from my home country of Ireland. He suggested that I take a look at the dramatic legal and policy measures that the EU was adopting in the 1990s to liberalize government controls over air transport. My compatriot urged me to do comparative work on EU and U.S. airline deregulation. And that's what I did.

Why did you choose McGill Law?

I will be heading the IASL, a remarkably long-lived academic institute — 65 years old in 2016. I directed an aviation law institute in Chicago and, along with my peers working worldwide in the fields of aviation and space law, I always looked to McGill as the premier setting where the future of these twin disciplines (and of aviation and space lawyers) is being imagined and realized. Moreover, the Institute is housed in a great law school that commands the universal esteem of the U.S. law professoriate. So this was not a difficult professional choice.

What is your fondest memory of your time as a law student?

I have been a law student in several countries, beginning in Ireland. My favourite memory is of winning the Irish national law student debate competition. My prize was a sponsored debate tour of colleges across the United States. That experience opened my horizons — after all, those were pre-Internet times and we knew little about higher education in other countries or continents — and led me to consider graduate work in North America. In fact, after one contentious debate in New York (I was supporting the reintroduction of compulsory military service in the U.S., a rather cheeky argument from someone living in a small neutral country), a lawyer in the audience offered me a summer associateship at his Manhattan mega-firm. So I came back the next summer to take the position, then signed up for graduate legal studies at Columbia, and never went back to live in Ireland.

What is the best piece of advice you ever received regarding your legal career?

The advice I received from that EU air transport official, literally as a “sidebar” discussion at a big legal conference, led to my whole career as an aviation and space law academic. Law students should always embrace opportunities for professional engagement and networking, no matter how it seems to drain your time or even when it doesn't involve your preferred areas of professional interest. It is remarkable how many legal careers are spurred almost magically by personal contacts or encounters (recall the job offer I received at that debate!). This is an extremely social profession, so you should always allow space in your law student career for serendipity.