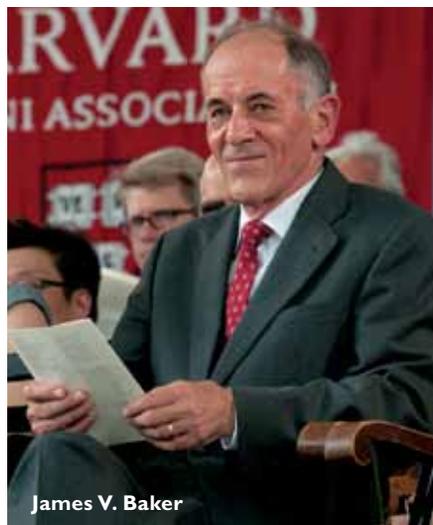


ing Harvard buddies) eagerly flock. They play softball and tennis (with rules changed “to make them better, in my opinion,” he says), along with his own complex creations. In “blind replica,” for example, teams are challenged to “replicate a structure [using Tinkertoys® or Legos®] that you cannot see, based on advice from a teammate who can see the original, but not the replication.” The final products are put on display and critiqued. “There’s an elaborate point system,” he says, “and everyone gets ranked.”

Although his career path may seem nonlinear, evidence of his drive—and innovation—is everywhere. In a formative experience just after college, the economics concentrator worked as a consumer-rights organizer under Ralph Nader, LL.B. ’58, and led the state-level campaign that established the first citizens’ utility board, in 1979 in Wisconsin. “Amazingly—we won!” he says, just as happy about it now. He went on to the London School of Economics, law school, and then to McKinsey & Company for five years before pursuing a longstanding interest in mass media in a job at the Museum of Television and Radio. Along the way, he and Beth Inabinett married. She is a volunteer coordinator at another nonprofit, Ashoka, and the couple have two daughters, now in their twenties.

In 1994, Sharpless took a calculated risk and joined the leadership team of a fledgling, pre-“Internet boom” software firm, Progressive Networks, that ultimately became the first company to develop and commercialize streaming audio and video, and then encouraged the technology for use in online activism. By the time he left, in 1997, to become executive vice president of the Discovery Channel’s Internet division, the company had grown to 300 employees and was well on its way toward a public offering.

In 2003, Sharpless was hired to lead Oceana, then barely a year old. The organization was begun by five ocean-conservation philanthropies, including the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Oak Foundation of Geneva and is still primarily funded by such groups. At the time, he knew little about oceans, but he liked the immense environmental challenge—and potentially world-changing rewards. “In college, I had



James V. Baker



William Thaddeus Coleman Jr.

...ative roles in the College, including Registrar, Dean of Administration, and co-master of Currier House, you have served with excellence and selfless devotion, helping to improve the education and life experiences of students, faculty, and staff.

a long list of ways in which I thought the world could be improved,” he says, smiling. And he still does. But he wouldn’t take the job without assurances of clear, business-like goals. “We have specific campaigns with measurable outcomes: we win or we lose,” he says. “And we are very effective, if we don’t spread ourselves too thin.”

Much of its conservation effort entails protracted litigation. Five years of work in Chile (seventh on the list of top fish-catchers), for example, led to national laws being “rewritten in 2012 to mandate that fishing quotas be based on scientifically set limits and that habitats be protected, including 118 seamounts [submerged mountains that are important oceanic ecosystems] that are now off-limits to bottom-trawling,” Sharpless explains. Also

Harvard Medalists

ON COMMENCEMENT DAY, three people received the HAA’s Harvard Medal, awarded for outstanding service to the University.

James V. Baker ’68, M.B.A. ’71. *President of the Harvard Alumni Association and President of the Harvard Club of the United Kingdom, First Marshal of the Class of 1968 and student athlete extraordinaire, you have served Harvard as a loyal leader and outstanding organizer, strengthening Harvard’s relationship with its international alumni.*

William Thaddeus Coleman Jr., J.D. ’43, LL.D. ’96. *Harvard Overseer, distinguished American, and devoted alumnus of the Harvard Law School, you have always upheld the highest standards for law and public service in our community and country, leading by exhortation and example as a visionary advocate for civility and civil rights.*

(Although illness prevented Coleman from attending the event, his daughter was present; President Drew Faust announced that the award would be given to him at a later date, before reading his citation aloud, along with the others).

Georgene Botyos Herschbach, Ph.D. ’69. *Exemplary Harvard citizen holding countless administrative*



Georgene Botyos Herschbach

required is that bycatch (fish caught unintentionally and in many cases discarded) be limited and managed by independent observers on all large commercial vessels.

This spring, Oceana forestalled offshore oil drilling in Belize by challenging the legality of the government’s awarding of leases “on 100 percent of its ocean to oil companies without seriously managing the risk of that activity,” Sharpless reports. (Among those working pro bono on the case is Rebekah Lacey, J.D. ’08.) “We won at the trial-court level, validating what we’ve been saying for two and a half years,” he adds. “The Belize government plans to appeal that decision, however. And so the battle continues.”

Resistance to fishing restrictions also looms on Easter Island. Oceana wants to