

Bernard Joseph Flatow

Doctor of Laws

Bernard Flatow began his academic career at George Washington University with the idea of becoming a diplomat, but timely advice from a mentor pointed him toward Carolina's then unrivalled Spanish program with the likes of Sturgis Leavitt, Sterling Stoudemire, Ralph Boggs and Nicholas Adams. Flatow earned his B.A. in Latin American Studies from Carolina in 1941 and used that foundation to begin a lifelong career in interactions between America and Latin America. He became a diplomat not in the world of political affairs but in the world of business and public relations. In the 1950s, Flatow worked in Bolivia as director of public relations for one of the largest tin mining companies in the world and later in a similar position for The Texas Company and Sinclair in Colombia and Venezuela. From the mid-1960s through the mid-1980s, Flatow handled public relations in Latin America for Pepsi Cola and 20th Century Fox. He used these extensive contacts with Latin America to spearhead exchange programs. One brought 54 Mexican professionals in 21 areas of study to Chapel Hill. Another created an exchange program between Venezuela and the Kenan-Flagler Business School, and a third exchanged specialists in physical therapy and rehabilitation of the blind between Mexico and Carolina's School of Medicine. This work garnered Flatow membership in the Mexican Institute of Culture as the first, and at the time only, North American member of that distinguished body. Starting in 1949, Flatow began collecting rare books pertaining to the early history of European contacts with the Western Hemisphere. His specialty was cronistas — journals kept by Spanish and Portuguese explorers documenting the discovery, conquest and colonization of what Europeans called the New World. Today, the Bernard J. Flatow Collection of Latin American Cronistas, housed in Carolina's Rare Book Collection, is one of very few such collections in the world. The collection has attracted widespread scholarly interest and stands as one of the priceless gems in Carolina's renowned collection of library materials. Flatow's awards include the General Alumni Association's Distinguished Service Medal (1983), the Board of Trustees' William Richardson Davie Award (1987), and the Silver Anvil Award from the Public Relations Society of America for the introduction of Sesame Street in Latin America in both Spanish and Portuguese.

For outstanding accomplishment in public relations and philanthropy, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is pleased to confer on Bernard Joseph Flatow the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*.