Episode 823: Major Milestone: Libertarian Walter Block Looks Back on 500 Peer-Reviewed Articles

Guest: Walter Block

WOODS: Well, this is a momentous occasion, and I told you on a previous episode, however many ago it was, that when you hit 500 published articles in the academic literature I would have you back. And you remembered; you wrote to me and said, "I'm on the verge; let's schedule it." And now it has happened. Here we are in January 2017. You hit 500 scholarly articles. Let's clarify for people why that's different from writing 500 newspaper articles. What's the difference? Some people who aren't in academia won't even know.

BLOCK: Well, there are several differences. One, a newspaper op-ed is usually 600 or 800 words. A refereed journal article or an article in a law review, for scholarly literature 800 words would not be accepted. It's usually at least 3,000 words, and it can be up to, I don't know, 30,000 words. So it's much, much bigger.

Secondly, you have to go through a refereeing process at an academic journal. And with an op-ed, especially if it's electronic, you don't. You just sort of spew it off, spew it out, whatever. So it's much more restricted to get an article in a law review or in a refereed journal, into scholarly literature.

WOODS: Tell me when and what the subject was of your very first published scholarly article.

BLOCK: Well, hang on one second. I have to go look it up. I don't remember.

WOODS: Oh, you don't offhand remember, "My proudest moment: it was my first published article?"

BLOCK: Sorry (laughing).

WOODS: (laughing) That's funny.

BLOCK: Pathetic. Well, it was a long time ago.

WOODS: Geez, I remember not — I don't remember what my first scholarly article was, but I know my very first published piece was in *Chronicles* magazine in '94.

BLOCK: Oh yeah? Huh.

WOODS: And it was about the Harvard graduation. I was letting my mouth off to somebody at the Mises Institute about how ridiculous it was, the terrible speakers, and one of them said, Why don't you write it up as an article? And the thought never occurred to me. And that began my writing career, right there.

All right, that was a little bit of an interlude while you're looking up your first article. Have you gotten there?

BLOCK: Yes, my first article was a book review of Thomas Vietorisz and Bennett Harrison, *The Economic Development of Harlem*, and it was put in the journal, *Growth and Change*. And this was in 1971.

WOODS: 1971. You were a pup.

BLOCK: A pup, a baby.

WOODS: I'm not trying to make you feel old, but I wasn't even born yet when you wrote that first article.

BLOCK: (laughing) Well, you have to have more respect for me, Tom. I'm 75 years old now.

WOODS: That is unbelievable. All right, do you remember what the gist of that article was?

BLOCK: (laughing)

WOODS: Am I asking too much here?

BLOCK: (laughing) It's okay. I was probably criticizing them. I don't remember it very clearly, but *The Economic Development of Harlem*, their view I think was: more government money to Harlem. My view was: more free enterprise.

WOODS: All right, so you've been pretty consistent over the years. So these are the sorts of things I want to ask you about. I will at some point get into advice you might have for people looking to get published, all that, but I'm interested in your record of publication, which is amazing. You hit 500 articles. Surely you went out for a nice dinner; you did something, right?

BLOCK: Not really. I don't know; it's just a number.

WOODS: It is not. If it were just a number you would not be on the show right now. I'm telling you that right now (laughing).

BLOCK: It's true it's a round number and it's a big number, but it's just a number. For example, I now have, oh, about 20 articles that are forthcoming — namely, they've been accepted for publication. So I'm really at 520 if you want to count it that way.

And I was at 500 if you include accepted articles that are forthcoming in a month or two or three. So 500, I didn't go out and have a special meal or have a special celebration, but I am delighted to share this good news with you, and hopefully my school, Loyola University, will in some way, I don't know, get publicity out of this. Although, the upper administration here isn't really that enamored of my publications, because they're social justice warriors, and most of my stuff is not really fully compatible with social justice warrioring, if I could make that word up.

WOODS: But we know how tolerant these folks are of other views. They're always lecturing us on being open-minded, so I'm sure they'll have a campus-wide event commemorating your 500 articles. I can't wait. Maybe I'll fly over there an attend.

BLOCK: Well —

WOODS: If that happened, by the way, I'm now pledging I would be there.

BLOCK: (laughing) They do favor diversity of race and sex and gender and sexual orientation and all sorts — I'm trying to get them to do it for people who are bald, but they haven't made that a protected group yet. But there's one thing they're really not in favor of diversity on, and that's ideology or intellectual diversity. So you know, we want a black feminist, a gay Marxist, and, I don't know, whatever, but to have a free enterprise or an Austro-libertarian is not as fully appreciated as it might be.

WOODS: No doubt. So you've published 500 — as I say, if we're talking about newspaper articles and stuff, you've published many, many, many articles of that sort.

BLOCK: Oh yeah.

WOODS: But we're just focusing on the academic literature here.

BLOCK: Yeah.

WOODS: As you look back over a career of — let's see. So 29 plus 17 — well, let's just say that's many years of publishing. Are there any topics in those articles where your views have evolved or changed in any way? Or you look back and say, If I had that article to do over again, I wouldn't make this point; I'd make that one, that sort of thing?

BLOCK: Not really. There is — I also have about 23 books published, and there was one book called *Defending the Undefendable*, where I regretted something that I said, and in a subsequent volume of it or a subsequent edition of it I got rid of that. But I think that's the only thing I really regretted. I don't think I've changed my views of anarchism or Austrianism or libertarianism or anything like that.

There is one thing I regret, and that is you're not supposed to publish any of these in two places, and one of my articles was published in two places. I only count it as one article. And that was a mistake of the editor. What happened was I thought Journal A had rejected the paper, and I sent it to Journal B, and Journal B published it. But then Journal A also published it. So I regret that.

WOODS: Wasn't there a time when you wrote a review of a book and submitted it somewhere, and then you'd forgotten you'd reviewed it, and so you reviewed it again? Wasn't there something like that? Am I misremembering that?

BLOCK: Yes, I did that. I'm an absent-minded professor, and I did review the same book twice, but I did it differently or in different words, and I'd forgotten it. And that I counted twice, because it was two different publications. It was a review of the same book. Now, obviously I wouldn't have too much of a difference. It was probably six months before that I reviewed the book, and then I reviewed it six months later. But there was no verbatim repeat kind of a thing, so it's not that I copied it and then sent it to another journal; it's rather I reviewed the book again, and I'd forgotten that I'd reviewed it.

WOODS: Do you remember what book it was?

BLOCK: No (laughing).

WOODS: (laughing) Okay, just as well. Apparently this book is not easy to remember (laughing).

BLOCK: (laughing)

WOODS: All right, let's talk about some of the back-and-forths you've had, because a lot of times when you get into a dispute with somebody you say, Look, buddy, let's take it to the journals. We'll hash this out in the journals. And you are known for being relentless. You just won't let up.

BLOCK: Yes.

WOODS: If the guy hasn't converted to anarchocapitalism, you're going to keep that argument going and going and going and going. Can you tell me maybe one of your favorite exchanges that you've had?

BLOCK: Well, before I do that — I'm a professor. I'm never allowed to answer questions directly. I have to go circuitously. So let me take a little side road here.

There's this guy, Sherwin Rosen, who wrote an article. He recently passed away. He was a professor at the University of Chicago. And he said, How do we know that Austrian economics is wrong and that neoclassical economics is right? And his answer was, Well, there are more neoclassical economists than there are Austrian economists, QED, ergo, you know? That proves that Austrian economics is wrong. Now, obviously this is crazy, because you can't say that neoclassical is wrong and Austrianism is wrong just because there are more of them than us. That's crazy. I mean, at one time phlogiston theory, most physicists agreed with it; now they don't. So you can't do that.

So me and my two coauthors, we wrote an article attacking him. And we said, Look, there is no objective way to tell which school of thought is more correct. You have to get down and dirty into the trenches and say, Well, how about on this point? How

about on Austrian business cycle theory? How about antitrust? What are the arguments? You can't do that. However, let's try to reductio. We have another objective criteria for who is right — and this gets me back to the question you asked — and that is: who publishes last? In other words, Tom, if you and I were having a debate, and you publish one, three, five, and seven, and I publish two, four, six, and eight, I win. Because I published last. And then if you publish a ninth article in this debate, then you win. Whoever writes last wins.

Now, this is obviously silly, because I might attack an article of yours, and you don't reply, because you don't think that it's worthy of your time, because you think that I'm an idiot. So I got the last word. So that's crazy. Another reason might be you and I are having an argument, and all of a sudden I die. I'm older than you, and I pass away. And you write one more article, and then you win. So the whole thing is crazy. However, it's just as sensible as counting noses to see who is right.

So anyway, me and my two coauthors — and here I can probably look up my two coauthors if you want. One of them was Westley — let me look up Westley.

WOODS: Chris Westley?

BLOCK: Yeah, Westley was one.

WOODS: All right, for everybody listening, he's now at Florida Gulf Coast University.

BLOCK: Oh, is he now? And the other is Alex Padilla. This is my 290th article.

WOODS: Okay.

BLOCK: It was published in the *Procesos De Mercado: Revista Europea De Economia Politica*. This is the journal of Huerta de Soto in Spain. And what we said is he who publishes last is right, and what we did is we got every debate between and Austrian and a neoclassical, and we had, oh, about 250 of them. And we said, Well, who published last in each case? And guess what: we published last in about 200 and they about 100 — I forget the exact numbers — so therefore we declared that Austrianism is correct.

WOODS: (laughing) All right, but people could stop answering us, because they feel defeated or because they're totally exasperated, right?

BLOCK: Right, right, or because they die.

WOODS: (laughing) Or because — (laughing). We just hound them throughout life.

BLOCK: Right, but it's no more silly than what Sherwin Rosen said. So now let's get back to the question you asked: which debate or series stands out the most?

WOODS: By the way, I think I know what it is.

BLOCK: Yes?

WOODS: Is it the Harold Demsetz one?

BLOCK: Yes.

WOODS: All right, okay. Go ahead and tell people about it.

BLOCK: Well, Harold Demsetz and I got into it, and what happened is I wrote an article attacking Coase for being a commie.

WOODS: All right, now hold on a minute. Most people aren't going to know who Coase is.

BLOCK: Oh, Ronald Coase is a Nobel prize-winning economist, and not only is he a Nobel prize-winning economist — of whom there are maybe 100 now over the last 60, 70 years, because sometimes they award it to two or three people — but he is one that is distinguished in many ways. One way is he was not awarded it with someone else. Like, Hayek was awarded it with someone else, so he only had half his share, but Coase had the whole share.

And another thing is Coase didn't really write that many articles. Many Nobel prize-winning people may not write 500 refereed journal articles, but they'll write 100 or 200. Coase only wrote maybe 10 or 12. Very small amount. But in academia, what you get brownie points for is not only writing journal articles and in prestigious journals — another point I have to mention. Virtually none of mine are in any prestigious journals, at least prestigious as known by the mainstream. I've got maybe one or two, but not very many. Most of my stuff is in Austrian journals and libertarian journals, and these are considered I guess cultish.

So anyway, getting back to Coase, not only do you get brownie points in academia for getting journal articles published — and by the way, journal articles are much more important than books. In some cases if you go up for tenure and you have three or four books in economics, they either don't count it or they count it against you. What they want are refereed journals and academic journals, refereed articles there. So what is even more important than getting published in a refereed journal? Citations. If your article gets published in a nice journal or even in a poor journal and it gets cited heavily by everybody and his uncle, well, now you get brownie points. Well, Coase's article on social costs — and as I say, he's written maybe a dozen articles? I'm not sure of the exact number. That is the most heavily cited journal article of all journal articles. So Coase is very, very famous for that.

And what I did is, following Murray Rothbard in this and in many, many other things — I really have to call out Murray Rothbard as my mentor, my guru, my friend. Murray might have written something criticizing Coase. He once wrote something criticizing blackmail laws in *Man, Economy, and State*, and he spent, I don't know, two sentences on that, and I must have written, oh, 30 articles on blackmail, and I have a book now of these 30 articles. Well, a similar thing happened with Coase. Murray might have, I think might have mentioned Coase as being an idiot in sort of a throwaway place or maybe one article. In one article, I remember his thing on air pollution, he did

mention Coase there. And what I did is I must have, I don't know, written maybe 15, 20 articles saying what a moron and a commie Coase was.

And Harold Demsetz, who hasn't won a Nobel prize, but he's perhaps my most famous, most prestigious in mainstream view, opponent. And I think he's a Nobelabile — Nobelabile means, you know, when they're trying to pick a new pope, there might be six or eight cardinals who are papabile — namely, capable of being pope, and these are the favorites. Well, every year before the Nobel prize in economics is awarded, they mention 5 or 10 or 15 people, and Harold Demsetz is usually mentioned.

So in any case, he wrote a blistering attack on one of my articles. And it was in a book that Mario Rizzo edited. And I wrote a reply saying, you know, You're wrong, Harold. Coase is really no good, and your defense of him doesn't hold water. And he wrote an article saying, you know, Block is an idiot. (laughing) I'm just giving the gist here. And then I wrote one, and he wrote one, and I wrote the last one. Ha ha. (laughing) So I won that debate.

WOODS: But how long did that go? That went a long time, didn't it?

BLOCK: Yes, it went a very, very long time. And he bitterly complained —

WOODS: (laughing)

BLOCK: It was the result of [inaudible] years.

WOODS: Wait a minute, I spoke over you. It was over how many years?

BLOCK: Oh, maybe 20 years. I could get the exact —

WOODS: Well, that's a long time.

BLOCK: Yeah.

WOODS: I mean, some people listening to the show now are going to be younger than that.

BLOCK: (laughing) Yes, that's true. Maybe 15 years. I forget how long it was. But the reason it was is I was working for the Fraser Institute. And I worked for the Fraser Institute for 12 years, and I feared to write an article criticizing him, because I would have been fired. As it happened, I was fired by them for being too free enterprise, but that's a whole other story. So after I was fired from the Fraser Institute, I wrote the next — I think the third in the series of five, and then he wrote a reply, and then I wrote another reply. So that's why that debate took so long, because I was afraid of getting fired for criticizing him, because the Fraser Institute people, Mike Walker, revered neoclassical economics and sort of only tolerated my Austrianism.

WOODS: Now, looking back on all these articles, what are you — I don't necessarily mean the one particular article, but just in general what are you proudest of? What are the two or three things that you look back and say, "I did that. That's a

contribution?" Or even if it wasn't particularly a contribution. "I just did a good job on this subject."

BLOCK: Well, there are two or three things that if I look back on my whole career — and not just journal articles, but speeches and op-eds and all sorts of other things — that I think I've made some sort of contribution, as opposed to writing about, say, the minimum wage or rent control or free trade or stuff like that, which I have written on, but I don't think that I've really made a unique contribution there. Let me see if I can think of two or three things where I think I have made a contribution.

One of them is on abortion. I have — oh, I don't know, 30 articles on that. I mean, when you have 500 articles you have 30 articles on pretty much everything — well, not everything, but many things. And I think I've made a contribution on evictionism. See, the problem there is that you have two very, very eminent libertarians who take the opposite view. Murray Rothbard is pro-choice, Ron Paul is pro-life, and you can't get too more highly credentialed libertarians than those two, I don't think. I don't know; maybe you could stick someone else in there, but I think those two are sort of head and shoulders above any libertarian theorist, and they take opposite points of view on that. And my work on that is called evictionism, which is a compromise between pro-life and pro-choice. And I've written, I don't know, 25 or 30 articles on that. I'm going to come out with a book on that. So that's one area where I think I've made a contribution.

Another area where I've made a contribution, again, is where libertarians are very divided, as is the general public, and that's immigration. And here you have Murray Rothbard who changed his mind. When Murray Rothbard first wrote about immigration, he was an open-borders guy. Then, I don't know, subsequently, ten years later or whatever, he and Hans Hoppe, who was another exquisitely credentialed libertarian — Hans Hoppe is one of the most brilliant libertarians to ever walk the planet. And Murray and Hans are against open borders. And then you have a whole bunch of people who are in favor of open borders, libertarians with, again, good libertarian credentials.

And I again have written, oh, five or six or eight articles on this, and I try to — what's the word? Not a compromise, but I try to have our cake and eat it. You see, the argument that I make is: suppose a Martian or a Chinese guy or an African guy or just somebody from not the United States starts homesteading in the middle of Alaska or in the middle of Wyoming in the Rocky Mountains on virgin territory. Now, the BLM, the Bureau of Land Management of the United States government claims all of this land, but they never homesteaded squat, so they don't really own it from a libertarian point of view. So from a libertarian point of view, this is virgin territory.

So our Martian or African or Asian or whoever it is, South American, comes and starts homesteading. Well, did he violate the nonaggression principle? No. So therefore if you restrict him from doing that, you're violating the nonaggression principle. And I don't like any violation of the nonaggression principle. So we have to have open borders.

On the other hand, what about if a billion Martians or, I don't know, Chinese, Africans, whoever it is, come. Won't they ruin our culture? Won't they commit crimes? Won't they — we have the rape-fugee problem in Germany and Sweden, where these people

come from Syria, and they have a different view about women. If women are walking alone on the street, they're fair game, or certainly if they're wearing a miniskirt, and you know, Western civilization has a very different view on that. And they are rape-fugees. They're raping women and molesting them and engaging in all sorts of crime, and we don't really want that.

So what's the solution? The solution is — wait for it...we should have a drumroll...Privatize every square inch of property. And if you privatize every square inch of property, then Hans and Murray are right. Then an immigrant is a trespasser. So in that way we can have our cake and eat it. We can keep the riffraff out and not violate the nonaggression principle.

Another point is a lot of people think that babies come from sexual intercourse. Babies come from the stork. The stork brings babies, and if it's a blue blanket it's a boy baby, and if it's a pink blanket it's a girl baby. Now, where do the storks get the baby from? Well, the country of Storkopia. That's where all babies come from, from Storkopia. So they're immigrants. So if you want to have regulated borders, then we have to have regulated birth. Tom, you have five lovely little girls. Did you get permission from the government to have those babies that you imported from Storkopia? No, you're a rotten kid, you and your wife. So here's a reductio ad absurdum of the closed or non-open border position — namely, you have to have restrictions on having babies like they had in China, which is slightly non-libertarian. So that's my contribution on borders.

Let me just mention one thing about Coase, because I think that's one of my — that's a third — Tom, we only go for a half hour?

WOODS: You talking about your articles, we could just go forever, so don't worry about that.

BLOCK: Okay, I want to mention — Okay, so one contribution that I made I think was in this business of immigration. Another one was with Coase and Demsetz. And let me just talk a little bit about that, and then let me give you my view on abortion, because I think abortion is another contribution that I've made, an important contribution.

So first Coase. Coase has this view, we have — what is it? — zero transactions cost world. And in a zero transactions costs the world, it doesn't matter what the judge says; Tom, you and I are not having a dispute as to this pair of shoes. And you say you own it, and I say I own it. And what Coase says is that in a zero transaction cost world, it doesn't matter what the judge says; the same person will get the shoes. So if you value the shoes at 100 and I value the shoes at 10, and the judge says you can get it, I won't be able to bribe you out of it because I only value it at 10, you value it at 100, so you keep the shoes. On the other hand, if the judge awards me the shoes, you'll keep it again, because you'll be able to bribe me out of it. You'll say, Block, how about 50 bucks?, and I'll say, Sure, because then I'll make a $40 profit, because I value the shoes at 10, and you value them at 100, so you offer me 50, and I make 40, and you make 50, because that's the difference between 50 and 100.

Now I criticize that on technical grounds. Namely, suppose you didn't have the money to bribe me out of it. You just valued those shoes at 100, but you don't have any money to bribe. So Coase even fails there, but that's a minor difficulty.

The major difficulty with Coase that Murray pointed out and that I elaborated on was, well, let's get back to the real world where there are high transactions costs. Think of, you know, I want to build an airport, and I have to bribe all the surrounding people to accept my noise pollution, and there are tens of thousands of people that are affected by the airport. What Coase says is, What should the judge do? Who should the judge award the noise pollution rights — or in the case where you and I, Tom, are fighting over this pair of shoes that you value at 100 and I value at 10. What Coase says is: give it to you, because you value it at 100, and if we give the shoes to you, the GDP will go up by 90 compared with me, because if the judge awards the shoes to me I'll only value it at 10, so the GDP will be 10, whereas if the judge awards it to you the GDP will be 100 — namely, 90 more — and the whole purpose of law is to maximize the GDP. That's a summary of the Coase-Demsetz position. And not just Coase and Demsetz, but this is the neoclassical view.

Well, what's wrong with that? Notice what's wrong with that is it's very different than the libertarian view. The libertarian view of who owns this pair of shoes, you or I, Tom, is who bought it. Namely, we look in the past. Do I have a bill of sale for it? Can I prove by a picture that my grandmother gave me these shoes? And if so, I own it, even though I don't value it as much as you own it. Whereas the Coasean view, we look to the future. You're going to, I don't know, write wonderful poetry with these shoes or do great things, and all I'll do with these shoes is get drunk, so therefore Coase would award you the shoes, even though I bought them and I made them. Which is sort of horrible. Coase is worse than the commies. At least the commies had a theory of property rights — namely, the bourgeois don't own it, and the proletariat do.

Coase's theory is really not even a theory of property rights, because relative prices change. Tomorrow I could value the shoes more than you, and then I get them from you, so no property rights would be safe. We'd all die. So much for the GDP. We'd all die, because I could just say I value your car more than you, so give your car to me, and if you don't I'm going to a Coasean judge, and he'll give your car to me. Property rights would no longer be safe. So that's the Coase business. And again, that's one area where I think I've made a contribution.

Now let me talk just a little bit about the abortion thing, because Murray is pro-choice, and Ron is pro-life. And my view is a thing called evictionism. Now, what the pro-life people say is that the woman who is pregnant has no right to evict — that is, rid herself of the baby — and no right to kill it. And you have to distinguish between evicting and killing, although in the first two trimesters there's not much of a distinction, because at our present medical technology, if you evict the fetus in the third month it dies, so the same result occurs. But if you evict the fetus at the eighth month, the fetus is viable.

So the pro-life people say you have no right to evict the fetus — that is, before the ninth month when the baby is due — and certainly not to kill it, whereas the pro-choice people say you have a right to do both. You can evict the fetus whenever you want, and you can also kill it, the partial birth abortion. Now, I'm not sure Murray had

that view, but many pro-choice people say it's a woman's body, a woman's right, yak, yak yak. She has the right to kill that fetus when it's a day before the natural birth would have occurred.

My view on this is a compromise. I say you have a right to evict but not to kill. So where do I get the right to evict? Well, the mother, I resort to property rights, which is half of libertarianism, the other half being the nonaggression principle. And I say, well, you have a right to evict, because the unwanted person in your womb, and you're the owner of the womb, you homesteaded that womb long before the baby came along, lady, woman, and you have a right to evict but not to kill.

So take the case of rape. I mean, if that's not a case of trespassing, nothing is a case of trespassing. A woman gets raped, and now there's a baby growing in her body. Certainly she has the right to evict it but not to kill it, because the baby is innocent. The father is a criminal, but the baby is innocent. And all babies have the same rights; they're all equally innocent, so if you have a right to evict the fetus, you have the right to evict the fetus in the case of rape, you have the right to evict the fetus in any other case.

So this is my attempt to bring together the two sides, to bring Ron and Murray together, to say that eviction is the correct libertarian view, and neither pro-life nor pro-choice is the correct libertarian view. So I think those three examples, Coase and open borders and abortion, would be my three areas where I've made some sort of original contribution.

And then there's a fourth where I've also done some work, where I call this a missile and hiding behind — In other words, what I do, Tom, is I get behind you, and under your arm I start shooting somebody else. Let's say I start shooting Hans Hoppe. And now the question is: who has the right to shoot back? You have a gun, we all three have a gun, but for some reason you can't turn around and shoot me. I'm the bad guy. You can shoot Hans, the victim, or Hans can shoot you, and my claim is a thing called negative homesteading — namely, that you were the first person that received the negative homesteading — I grabbed you — so Hans has a right to shoot you; you don't have the right to shoot Hans.

And then the other one is: suppose I pick you up bodily and throw you at Hans. And if there's a contact, both of you will die, and each of you has a gun. And if one shoots the other one, the other one will stop in his tracks. Well, who has the right to shoot whom? Well, again, here Hans has the right to shoot you; you don't have a right to shoot him, even though you're both equally innocent. But you were the first homesteader of the misery. So I think those are the four areas where I've made some sort of original contribution.

WOODS: On the abortion question, you and Jakub Wisniewski had a bit of a back and forth — speaking of topics where there's been an exchange. So I'm going to link to that, so people can be familiar with the different sides of this. I mean, there's a lot that I could link to at TomWoods.com/823. Of course I'm going to link to WalterBlock.com, so people can look through all your articles.

I want to ask you about, though, a question not about any specific topic, but about publishing in general. I know I've got some younger people who listen. Some of them are college students; some of them even are graduate students. What do you give them — or even young professors, for that matter. What do you give them as advice about publishing just in general, publishing in articles in particular?

BLOCK: Three words: never give up. When I get a rejection — and I get plenty of rejections. Oh, by the way, I might have more rejections from *The American Economic Review* than anyone else. I don't like to brag, but I must have maybe 100 rejections from them. I'm not sure. A lot. And they're the most prestigious journal in mainstream economics, the most prestigious journals in Austrian economics are the *QJE* or *RAE* or Huerta de Soto's journal. But those are not seen as worthy of promotion or tenure on the part of most economists, because most economists are neoclassical.

My three word advice is: never give up. So when I get a rejection, what I do is I look at the referee's reports. A lot of times the editor says this is a piece of crap and we're not even sending it to referees. So that doesn't help me. But sometimes they'll say why, and more often most places, they'll referee the thing, and they'll go give it to two or three referees, and each of the referees will say something, why they're rejecting my paper. And I'll read it, and if they say something sensible — rare — but if they say something sensible, I'll redo the paper, and then I'll send it out to another journal. And then I'll send it out to another journal. And then I'll send it out to another journal. My world record is 36 rejections.

WOODS: That's ridiculous. Did you not ever stop and say, Maybe this is just a crummy article?

BLOCK: No, no, no. My attitude is "pearls before swine." If I write it, it's great (laughing). Yeah, my advice to young professors or graduate students who want to get a job in academia, and in order to get a job in academia in this discipline you have to have refereed journal articles — not books. In literature and history I think it's books more than refereed journal articles; I'm not sure, but in this one you have to have refereed journal articles. And my advice is: never give up. Pearls before swine.

I have another article right now that I've coauthored with two people, and we've had maybe 26 or 27 rejections. My two coauthors said, you know, Shouldn't we give up? And I said, What, are you kidding? This is another contribution I think I've made, and this is: why is it that libertarians are a failure? Why isn't Ron Paul president, for God's sake? Why wasn't Murray head of the Council of Economic Advisors, or why isn't Bob Murphy head of the Fed, and then he gets rid of the Fed? Why does the Libertarian Party get 1% of the vote or 2 or 3% of the vote? Why is libertarianism, which is exquisitely beautiful and correct and ethical, why do most people reject it? And my answer to that is sociobiology. Very few people are mutants. Most people are hardwired for socialism.

And this paper has been rejected by maybe 25 journals already, and my coauthors are saying maybe we should give up, and I say, Not on your life. This is a brilliant paper, if I may say so myself. I'm not responsible for all of it; I'm maybe responsible for a third of it. And I'm never going to give up. I'm hoping that I break my personal best record of

36 rejections, and I'm going to keep going. And you know, every once in a while we revise the paper, because there is some referee who says something sensible, but mostly they're just full of beans, and we ignore them, and I send it out to another journal.

In law reviews it's different. See, in economics you're only allowed to send an article to one journal at a time, and some journals take a day to reject it, like when the editor says, I'm not sending this crap out to a referee, but sometimes they send it — more often they send it to a referee, and it takes three to six months to get all the referees' reports. So to have 36 rejections might have been five years or eight years. And you might think, Well, in eight years maybe the time dimension creeps in, because what you wrote eight years ago is not relevant. But most of the stuff I write I think is timeless. It's based on principles, so it wouldn't really matter. The examples might be dated, eight years ago or 15 years ago, but that's a minor point. So my advice to young scholars is: don't give up, keep going.

You know, I have to mention something else, and that is coauthorships. I remember, Tom, one time you were in a big, big room that might have been 300 people, and what you said: "I'm probably the only person in this room that hasn't coauthored an article with Walter Block."

WOODS: That was one of my favorite lines ever.

BLOCK: Yes.

WOODS: And then I can't even use that anymore, because eventually we did coauthor an article.

BLOCK: Yes, we coauthored one article.

WOODS: Yeah.

BLOCK: I like to coauthor articles. It's sort of a way of making friends. So I now send this out to radio land or blog land or wherever this interview is going, and that is to all Austro-libertarian graduate students and young professors who are having trouble getting their article published because they had it rejected five times and now they're giving up: send it to me. If I like it, I'll add to it, and I'll coauthor it with you. Hey, how do you think I get to 500 (laughing)? A lot of coauthorships in there. So I make this offer to all bonafide libertarians and Austrian economists, that if you're thinking of giving up on an article, don't. Instead, send it to me, and if I like it — I don't like everything I'm sent, but I like a lot of things that are good Austrian, libertarian stuff that are rejected by mainstream journals.

First what I'll do before adding to it and coauthoring it with you is I'll say, Well, which journals have rejected it? And you'll give me the list of five or six, and I'll say, Here are another ten. Go send it to them. And if these other ten, plus your original six, all reject it, then send it to me, and maybe I'll coauthor it with you. And the odds of getting it published with me as a coauthor are much higher, because I now have editors who really like what I do — and I won't say they'll publish anything. I mean, if I

send them something horrible, they're not going to publish it. But they're very likely to publish it.

And this whole thing with editors is sort of a crock, because if I'm an editor of a journal, and I like your article, Tom, what I'll do is I'll send it out to Referee Goodie. Referee Goodie likes everything. On the other hand, if I don't like what you wrote, Tom, that you sent to me, then I'll send it to Referee Baddie, and Referee Baddie hates everything. And I'll say, Well, Referee Baddie didn't like it, so I'm rejecting your paper. So this whole process isn't really as kosher as it could be.

Another point: when you send it out to a law review, you don't have to limit it to one journal. You can send it to 700 law reviews all in one fell swoop with espresso. So another word of advice to young scholars: if you're writing something that is, say, economics, but it has something to do with law — and most things in economics have to do with law, like the minimum wage law. Suppose you wrote something on the minimum wage law, and it got rejected by 25 journals. Well, send it to 700 law reviews, and maybe one of them will pick it up. Now, for economics a law review isn't as good, as much credit, but better a publication in a law review. And it doesn't have to be the *Harvard Law Review*. The "XYZ Law Review" is better than nothing.

So if you're trying to get tenure or you're trying to get a job and you need more articles published, another aspect is to send it to a law review, and there you're allowed to send it to 700 or 800 or however many law reviews there are in the world and all over the country. And then you have a much better shot, because you have 700 groups looking at it.

I have to tell you one other thing, and that is — One thing that I'm very proud of in my publications is that I have many, many, almost 100 — well, maybe 75 or 80 — articles coauthored with students. And these are undergraduate students, and it's very rare for an undergraduate student to get a journal article in a refereed publication.

And how did this happen? The way it happened, I remember I was teaching at Holy Cross, and this must have been in 19— oh, I don't know, maybe '98 or something like that. And what happened is I assign term papers to all my students, and some of these term papers are pretty good. And in any case, what happened is I got a message from a law review saying, Hey, we'd like to publish this paper of yours. And then I wrote back and I said, you know, Sorry, this article that I sent you, well, I sent it to another journal — I'd sent it to dozens of other journals, hundreds of others — and this other journal beat you to it. They accepted it, and I accepted their acceptance; namely, I said I would publish with them. So I can't allow you to publish this, because you can't publish it in two places.

So the editor wrote back saying, Well, we really liked your stuff. Do you have anything else that you can send us? And I didn't, but I had a whole bunch of student term papers. So what I did is I added some stuff to the term paper, and I sent a term paper with maybe a quarter or a third of the material in it that I wrote, and I edited the term paper, and guess what: they accepted it. And I said, whoa, whoop-de-doo. I've got a whole new venue for undergraduate term papers that I assign. And I have maybe 75 or 80, maybe 100 of my undergraduate term papers that have been turned into refereed journal articles.

Now, of them I'm the most proud of about five or six that I didn't coauthor, but these were term papers where the students criticized me. For example, one of my articles, I said something like the male-female income gap is not due to discrimination; it's due to the fact that women work longer and harder than men, and if they're married then they're busy with childcare and stuff, so even if they're of equal ability they're not going to get as much success academically as men. And I had a girl student, and she wrote a paper just blasting the hell out of me, saying, you know, Block is wrong; Block is an idiot. Now, she was a very good student. She got an A, and I'm very proud that I gave her an A. She earned an A, even though the whole semester, I mean, she was a total Pinko, and all she did was criticize me. But she was a very bright girl. She's now getting her PhD at Duke. She might be finished by now.

In any case, she wrote this article saying, Block is full of beans. So I couldn't coauthor it, because it was an attack on me, so instead what I did is I added to it — rather, I recommended footnotes; I recommended more bibliography, and I edited the thing, because some of the wording wasn't good. And then I got it published in I think a very prestigious journal. I forget which one; I could look it up if you want. And then what I did is I wrote to the same journal — I think it was the *Journal of Business Ethics*. I wrote to the same journal my refutation or my rejoinder, and they rejected it. So this journal accepted a student paper and rejected the professor's paper — namely mine — but I got it published elsewhere.

But the point is that I have maybe five or six out of these almost 100 student term papers that are single authored — namely the students — and I helped them get it published. And I think this article that this girl wrote was rejected three or four times, and she said, you know, Should I give up? And I said never give up, and eventually we got it published, and it was a really decently prestigious journal. I think it was the *Journal of Business Ethics*, but I'm not sure; I'd have to look that up.

WOODS: All right, well, one thing I've liked about all of this, the great Walter Block story, is that when I would go to what was formerly known as the Austrian Scholars Conference, you would bring a bunch of students from your university with you, and they would have papers to deliver, or they would be attending and they would be interested. It was that you weren't the ordinary professor. You were actually encouraging them to write things up, to get them published. These are not thoughts that occur to students spontaneously: "Oh, I think I'll take my term paper and submit it to an academic journal." This never, ever, ever occurs to any undergraduate. And you basically helped give them a leg-up in their careers, because who else as an undergraduate has a peer-reviewed journal article? And you did that, because for you you're not just punching a clock when you go into school.

You really love what you're doing, which is what makes the fact that those SOBs put you through all that nonsense all the more horrifying, because I'm sure they do have people who are just there to mark the time. And they've got a gem like Walter Block, and they're going to give him a problem — ? Anyway, I'm getting a little bit off the subject of your articles.

WalterBlock.com is where people can get an overview of what you've been doing and can look at a lot of these articles, because a lot of them can be read online. You don't

have to go through an academic library to dig them up. You have hyperlinked a bunch of them, so they can check them out.

Any final words as you reflect on 500 articles? I can't believe that you're saying it's just a number. Get out of town. I would be letting the whole world know that I had done 500 articles. Are you kidding me?

BLOCK: Well, thanks, Tom. You're very kind. I just wanted to mention one thing. It's a little off the topic, and that is another part of my career that's semi-related to this is that I have now maybe five or six or seven former students of mine who are now professors. I think the most famous of them are Andrew Young and Ed Stringham. And there's Dan D'Amico and Nick Snow and two or three others who are now professors, and they were my undergraduate students. Dan D'Amico is now teaching at Brown University, so that's a very prestigious place. And I also have, oh, maybe another six or eight or ten students who are now in various PhD programs who were also former students of mine, and all of them wrote term papers for me that were published in referred journals. So this is another way that I've been promoting the careers of my students.

And I mean, Murray Rothbard is the most influential person in my life academically. And I'm trying to give back to him, and what he did to me was pass to me the baton. You know, in a relay race, one runner passes a baton to another. Well, Murray Rothbard passed on the baton to me of liberty and libertarianism and Austrian economics, and I'm trying to pass this baton on to my students. And they will then pass on the baton that I gave them that I got from Murray that he got from Mises to their students. So I see myself as part of a long tradition of promoting liberty and good economics, and I'm just delighted that I've made some small contribution. And thanks for having me on your show.

WOODS: Always a pleasure, Walter. Hope to see you soon. Thanks a lot.

BLOCK: Take care.