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Dautch Family and Friends Endow Scholarships

A scholarship for incoming first-year law students has been established at the University at Buffalo Law School in memory of Harold A. Dautch, a prominent Buffalo-area retailer whose business and real estate enterprises extended from Western New York to New England and to the Rockies.

Dautch's special affection for UB was noted by his family in announcing the new scholarship. He had received both his undergraduate and law degrees from UB. He died at age 77 on Nov. 20, 1988.

His son Lawrence, of Williamsville, N.Y., noted his father's deep regard for his alma mater. "He was always proud of the Law School and his legal education," Lawrence said. "We felt that such a scholarship would be a fitting memorial."

The permanent endowment of the Dautch Scholarship was presented by Ceccele M. Dautch, wife of the late Mr. Dautch, and the couple's children: Lawrence; Robert, of Carpinteria, Calif.; and Patricia, of Boston, Mass.

"My father had a great respect for education," Lawrence Dautch recalled. "Although he became more active in practicing law as he developed retailing interests, he always wrote his own contracts, something he traced to his Law School training."

Mr. Dautch graduated from the Law School in 1937. After practicing for a while, he turned to retailing, beginning what has developed into the Jess's department store chain. He started the chain of quality stores in the 1940s with the purchase of one store in Niagara Falls. That store is still part of the system, with three others anchoring various malls, including Summit Park and Eastern Hills.

He had pioneered the idea of "better upscale" department stores serving as a key to indoor mall shopping. He was one of the principals in developing the Boulevard Mall on Niagara Falls Boulevard in Amherst in the early 1960s, when enclosed shopping centers were in their infancy.

The Boulevard Mall at one time in the 1960s was one of the busiest commercial crossroads in any U.S. suburb. The mall was one of a number of real estate ventures in which Mr. Dautch had interests.

He also founded the consolidated Bowling Corp., a network of bowling centers now known as Conbow Corp. The chain includes bowling centers in the Buffalo area, throughout New England, in the Denver area and in Western Canada.

Mr. Dautch graduated from the old Hutchinson Central High School in Buffalo before attending the University and the Law School. As a UB undergraduate he was the starting guard on the basketball team during the 1930-31 season when the team went undefeated. This fall he was inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame.

Before he founded the Jess's store, Mr. Dautch practiced law in Buffalo. During World War II he served in the Army in Hawaii from 1943 to 1945. He attained the rank of staff sergeant.

The Dautch family connection to the Law School has been very evident. Two of Harold Dautch's brothers, Charles and Israel, graduated from UB Law, as did a brother-in-law, Sam Darlich. An award in the name of Charles Dautch is presented at the Law School commencement annually to an outstanding law graduate.

UB Law School Dean David B. Filvaroff said the newly established Harold A. Dautch Scholarship "is a truly singular way to honor his memory and at the same time provide vital financial assistance to a student of law."

Dean Filvaroff added that "steps such as these point up the loyal supportive network that surrounds the Law School. We are honored and pleased that Mr. Dautch's family has chosen the school to help perpetuate his memory."

Associate Dean Alan S. Carrel said that additional contributions can be made to the scholarship fund. Those interested can obtain information from Dean Carrel at (716) 636-2054.