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Justice Denman Wins Jaeckle Award

Mid the thundering applause of a standing-room-only crowd, Justice M. Dolores Denman, of the Appellate Division of State Supreme Court, Fourth Department, graciously accepted the Jaeckle Award for 1991 from William R. Greiner, professor of law and interim president of the University.

Named for UB alumnus Edwin F. Jaeckle, Class of 1915, the Jaeckle Award is the highest honor the Law School and the Law Alumni Association can bestow. It is given annually to an individual who has distinguished himself or herself and has made significant contributions to the Law School and the legal profession.

"She is a woman of impressive intellect, keen judgment — an outstanding judge, strong in all the good ways, yet always warm, humane, human and possessed with a fine sense of fairness," said Dean David B. Filvaroff.

According to Law School historian Robert C. Schaus, she is the first woman to receive the Jaeckle Award — the latest of numerous "firsts" for Justice Denman. In 1983, she was named by Gov. Cuomo as the first woman in the state to be given permanent status in the Appellate Division.

Schaus noted that she was also the first woman to become president of the UB Law Alumni Association. And seven years later, when her husband, James B. Denman, became president of the association, they became the first husband and wife to have both held the office.

Professor Thomas Headrick, former dean of the Law School, said: "She has always combined a no-nonsense, incisive legal acumen with a compassionate and passionate commitment to justice, in ways that do enormous credit to the bench, the profession and the school. Beyond that, she has constantly been there for her Law School..."

Justice Michael F. Dillon, who was presiding justice of the Appellate Division of State Supreme Court, Fourth Department, spoke glowingly of his friend. "Today we honor one of the most distinguished people ever to graduate from this Law School," said Dillon.

A former associate counsel to the Panama Canal Co. and to the Canal Zone government, Justice Denman is also a former assistant Erie County district attorney. She began her judicial career in 1972 when she was appointed to Buffalo City Court by the late Mayor Frank A. Sedita.

She was elected to Supreme Court in 1976 and elevated to the Appellate Division a year later by Gov. Hugh L. Carey.

In 1978, Justice Denman resigned in order to run in the Democratic primary for state attorney general, a race she narrowly lost to Attorney General Robert Abrams. She was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court in 1979 and was reappointed to the appellate court in 1981 by Gov. Carey.