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# Honors and Oratory at the *Buffalo Law Review* Dinner

*Left to right: Carol Greiner, Thomas E. Headrick, Barry B. Boyer and Kevin D. Szczepanski '95*



*Left to right: Samuel R. Miserendino Sr. '54, Stuart A. Gellman '61 and David C. Fielding '61*



There were words of celebration and words of admonition at the sixth annual Buffalo Law Review Dinner, held on April 6 at the Classics V Banquet and Conference Center.

The celebratory words came in honor of UB Law School Professor Thomas E. Headrick, now provost, who was honored at the dinner for his distinguished service to the school (See article on Professor Headrick beginning on page 92). The featured speaker at the dinner was the Hon. Hugh B. Scott '74, the former City Court judge who was named U.S. magistrate for the Western District of New York.

Scott addressed the graduating students in the packed room with an address that stressed themes of responsibility for the welfare of the profession they are now entering. He said he

came out of UB Law in 1974, in the midst of the congressional Watergate hearings.

"The nation was watching a lot of people, including the attorney general of the United States, the president, all the people around him, fighting back through the flames of dishonor and disgrace. And all of us know that the public had to, in that era, have a damaged view of the legal profession."

Fast-forward to 1995 and the antic shenanigans of the opposing attorneys in the O.J. Simpson murder trial in Los Angeles.

"I know the public's got to be sitting there with a real sense of amazement," Scott said. "Not legitimately so, but because the public knows so very little about our profession and our system. The least negative thing that happens during that trial has the effect of making the public have even greater disdain for some of the practices and some of the things we do each day."

That poor public perception of attorneys, Scott

said, chips away at the profession. Potential clients may choose to represent themselves. Tort reforms "start passing the legislatures of this country like a knife through warm butter." The profusion of lawyers increases pressures on some to take cases for which they aren't qualified.

And, Scott cautioned, it's a mistake to think that these public perceptions affect only lawyers in small practices. Even in firms with large corporate clients, he said, such attitudes as suspicion over billing practices can mean the loss of a lucrative legal contract.

The solution, he said, lies partly in doing well by doing good.

"Our profession has historically been very much a part of the communities in which we practice," Scott said. "There are benefits that derive from our participation in community affairs, whether it's on a volunteer board or our local neighborhood groups. Laypeople then get a chance to see the kind of contributions we can make by these skills that we've gained, by this education we've had. At the same time, there's a potential client base out there, where people see you not as a mouthpiece, but as a valuable member of the community.

"You need to lead as new lawyers," Scott told the audience. "Gray hair doesn't always mean wisdom, it doesn't always mean good ethics, it doesn't always mean concern for the condition of the profession 20 years from now.

"Our practitioners of some experience have a lot to offer, but so do you. You bring bright, fresh approaches to problems that we've faced for years, and that ought to be welcomed by the bar, and that's something you ought to seek to do."

Dean Barry B. Boyer, in saluting the editors and staff of the *Buffalo Law Review*, noted: "Lots of the things that we're trying to do in the New Curriculum are to take the spirit of responsibility, that craft to fit with the work product, and make it available in other forms throughout the curriculum. In that way you're a real model for us.

"Nowhere else in higher education does the faculty turn over to students the responsibility for editing, publishing and selecting the scholarship that is going out in a learned journal," the dean said. "That is a heavy responsibility for law journal people to bear. We are very fortunate now, and have been for some years, that this responsibility is carried out so well.

"The people in this room know exactly what that means, know that when the deadline pressure is on and the classroom assignments are building up, you have to make some tough decisions and get the work done and get it out the door. ... The law review, for many of us who have been there and have had that experience, is one of the most powerful forms of learning that we ever have." ■



*Joseph N. Del Vecchio '96, Julia A. Solo '95 and Julia S. Hillel '96*

*Hon. Hugh B. Scott '74 (left) and Kevin D. Szczepanski '95*

