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Into the Future: The Class of '97 Hears a Plea for Responsibility and Individual Rights

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Herald Price Fahringer '56 gave the keynote address

Into the future

The Class of '97 hears a plea for responsibility and individual rights

Three years of hard work, late-night studying and tuition payments came to a happy end on May 17, 1997, for about 230 graduating seniors at UB Law School's 108th Commencement.

The always-majestic afternoon ceremony was held at the Center for the Arts, which was packed with friends and family of the graduates. It was highlighted by the keynote address of Herald Price Fahringer, a 1956 graduate of the Law School and now a well-known trial lawyer in New York City.

Dean Barry B. Boyer and UB President William R. Greiner welcomed those in attendance. President Greiner prompted a standing ovation by the faculty on stage in



Commencement

recognizing Professor Jack Hyman, who is in his 50th year of service to UB Law School. Dean Boyer – who saluted Hyman as “to many of us, the embodiment of UB Law School” – announced the establishment of a scholarship in Hyman’s name, to go to an incoming law student who has overcome adversity and shows promise in public service.

The student address was given by graduating senior Valerie Kenyetta Curry Bradley, who paid wry tribute to the mnemonic devices all law students are saddled with by inventing one of her own: AIMS.

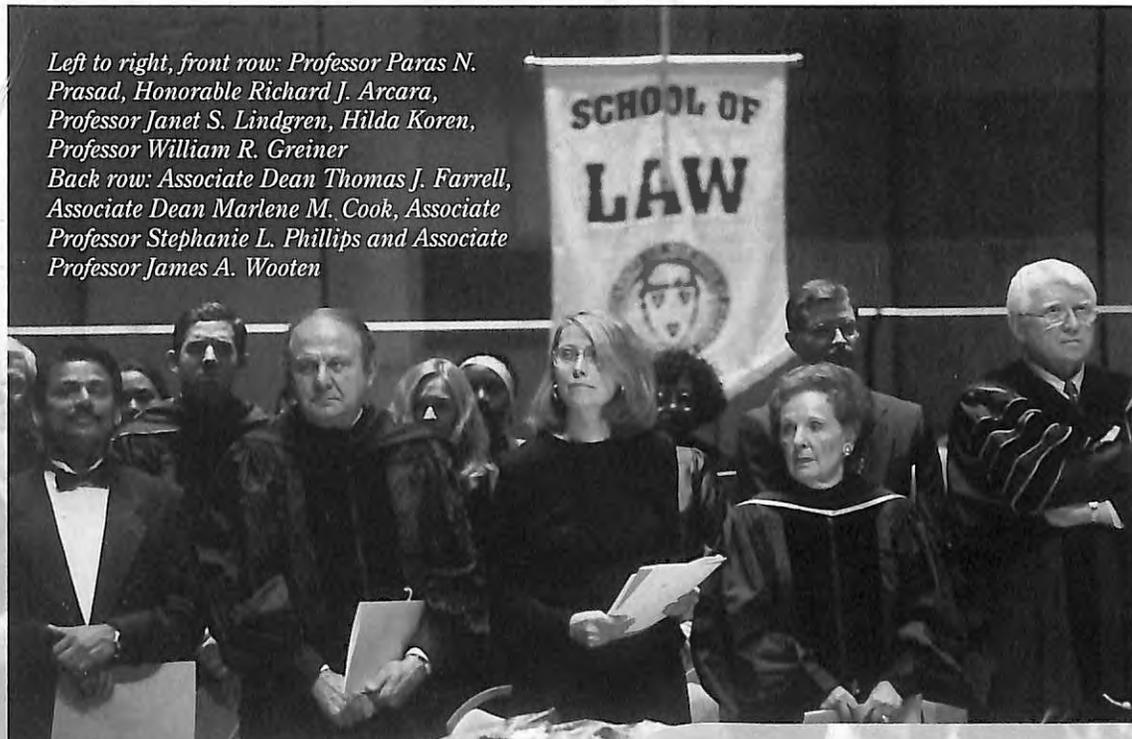
A, she said, is for acceptance: “Accept the responsibility of being a representative of the group. The fruits or spoils of your labors will be thrust upon other attorneys.” I is for Identify the positives: “You need to tap into your ability to take a negative experience and turn it into a positive one. In other words, look for the silver lining and make it work for you.” M is for Impress yourself. (“It’s not a perfect mnemonic,” she said with a smile.) “Your achievements help to build your personal armor, to protect against the impact of stereotypes.” And S, she said, is for solidarity: “We should use our energies to commiserate, encourage and support one another.”

Bradley, who was selected as speaker by her fellow students, encouraged them not to overlook the simple tenets of success and ethics. “We live in a very complex society,” she said, “and it’s easy to think that the solutions to our problems must be complex as well. But the strategy I offer today is based on simple concepts. It’s their application that is difficult.”

Professor Kenneth Joyce, a perennial choice as faculty speaker for commencement ceremonies, was unable to attend because of a family emergency.

Dean Boyer, in introducing Herald Price Fahringer as the keynote speaker, noted that Fahringer has taken 14 cases to the U.S. Supreme Court and won every

*Left to right, front row: Professor Paras N. Prasad, Honorable Richard J. Arcara, Professor Janet S. Lindgren, Hilda Koren, Professor William R. Greiner
Back row: Associate Dean Thomas J. Farrell, Associate Dean Marlene M. Cook, Associate Professor Stephanie L. Phillips and Associate Professor James A. Wooten*



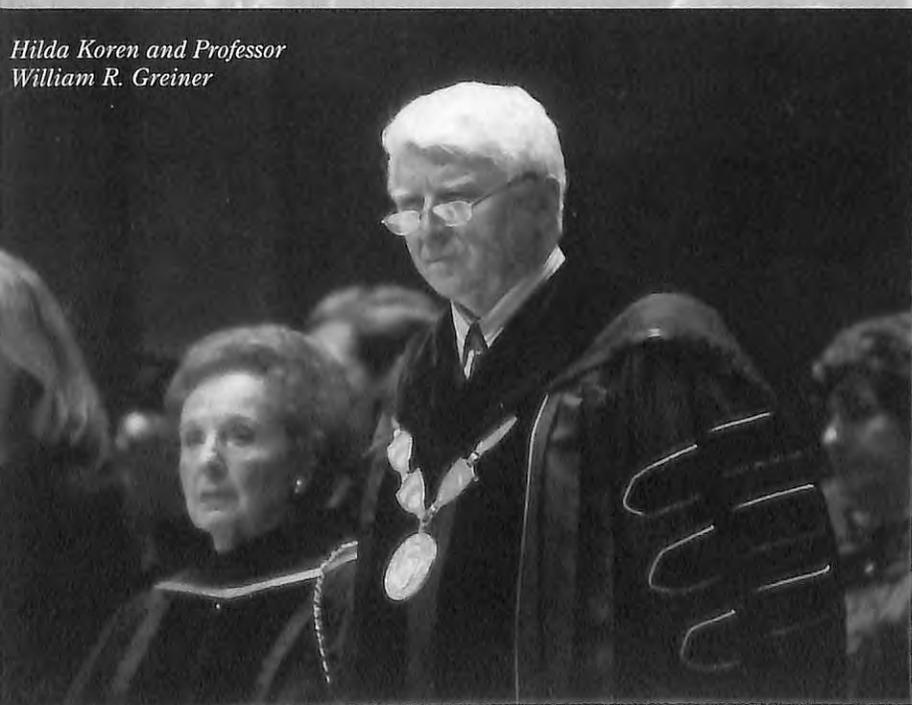
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Hilda Koren and Professor William R. Greiner



Yvonne McDonald '97 sang the national anthem

PHOTOS: JOE TRAVER

one of them. He is noted especially for his defense work in First Amendment cases, and has represented such high-profile clients as Larry Flynt, Klaus Von Bulow, Jean Harris and Al Goldstein.

Fahringer began by acknowledging the efforts of the lawyers who helped give birth to the American adventure. Thirty-three out of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were lawyers, he said, as were 34 of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention. "I believe that's why we are the freest nation in the world," he said, "because the men and women who built our government were lawyers and they were sensitive to the rights of the individual rather than the rights of the government. We are the caretakers of that system. Lawyering is one of the most noble professions of all. No other profession so affects and alters the character of society itself."

However, Fahringer said, "at no time in our history have some of these rights been under greater attack." He cited a number of social factors that threaten the idea of the rights of the individual. For example, he said, a seeming outbreak of "meaningless violence" has "left a chronic fear and discontent that erode our faith in our institutions. This threatens to curtail individual rights, because people become tempted to prefer order over liberty."

"But the answer to crime is more effective police, not the curtailment of individual liberties. When liberty is under attack, all of our rights are threatened."

Many of the infringements on individual liberties are subtle, Fahringer said, but

*James M. Gerlach '97, left, and
Craig A. Hurley-Leslie '97*



Commencement

no less threatening because of it. He cited recent cases in Erie County in which public opinion has been mustered against judges because of their decisions on the bench. "We've seen threats to remove judges from office because they've rendered unpopular decisions," he said. "That, I think, is unacceptable."

He urged the graduates to work to resist any infringement of individual liberties, to do their part in the long chain of attorneys who've sworn to uphold the Constitution and its guarantees of individual rights. "Being a good lawyer," he said, "is being concerned about the well-being of your community."

Before the conferral of degrees, a long list of student awards and prizes were announced. A listing of these appears in an accompanying story.



*Catherine R. Nugent '97 with husband Marc C. Panepinto '97
and daughter*



*Jessica V. Murphy '97, left, with
Professor Elizabeth B. Mensch '79*



*Denise R. Neuhaus '97 (right) and
husband Jon Schoen*

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Members of the Class of 1997

PHOTOS: JOE TRAVER