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Honoring our best

UB Law Alumni Association recog- nizes six honorees

The varied and surprising ways in which UB Law training has made a difference in the world were on display at the UB Law Alumni Association's 35th annual meeting and awards dinner.

Honored were five alumni who have made a significant impact through their work – in private practice and the courts, in public service and politics, and in the business world. In addition, a non-alumnus who has spent a lifetime in service to the Buffalo community was recognized for his achievements.

The dinner, held May 14, 1997, brought together alumni and friends of the Law School at the Hyatt Regency Buffalo. The Distinguished Alumni Awards were established in 1963 to recognize the valuable contributions that UB Law alumni have made to their profession and the community.

The honorees, with excerpts from their remarks and some words of introduction:

Thomas R. Bremer '79, senior vice president and general counsel of U.S. Surgical Corp., maker of surgical staples and microsurgery equipment, was honored "for his exemplary performance in business." Bremer earned an engineering degree from UB before making the switch to law school.

"In everyone's life there are major crossroads that he has to pass through and take one fork or the other," he said. "There were two crossroads in my life. First was the decision to leave the fine engineering school of the University at Buffalo and go to law school. But for UB Law I would not be a lawyer today. One of the major reasons I went to UB was that I was unable to afford any other law school. I have never forgotten that, and I will never forget that. I think the most



Left to right, front row: Honorable Joseph D. Mintz '56, John F. Canale '47, Honorable Dennis C. Vacco '78; Back row: Thomas R. Bremer '79, Honorable Arthur O. Eve, Honorable Michael A. Battle '81



Left to right: David Edmunds Jr., James A.W. McLeod '74, Mark G. Pearce '78 and James P. Davis '81



*Honorable E. Jeannette Ogden '83, left, and
Alexandra Rivas '96*

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PHOTOS: JOHN HICKEY



important thing I was taught was how to think and how to solve problems.

"The second crossroads was being given the opportunity, at the ripe old age of 35, to become general counsel for a major corporation. My CEO is sitting in this audience, and I'd like to thank him for that opportunity."

Law School Dean Barry B. Boyer, in introducing Bremer, said: "Litigation has been crucial in U.S. Surgical's success, and Tom takes justifiable pride in the fact that during his tenure as general counsel the company has never lost a major lawsuit. They even won a patent case in U.S. Supreme Court, a victory that was worth several hundreds of millions of dollars to the company.

"In addition to being an outstanding litigator, Tom embodies the ideal of corporate lawyer as problem-solver and deal-maker rather than deal-breaker."

Hon. Michael A. Battle '81, elected as an Erie County Family Court judge in 1996, was honored "for his many contributions to the betterment of the community." Battle, a former president of the Minority Bar Association of Western New York, helped open the federal public defender's office in Western New York and represented indigent clients facing federal criminal charges. He also worked with the U.S. attorney's office in general litigation and the civil division.

"As difficult and demanding as Family Court can be," he said, "there is not a day that goes by that I am not thankful for the opportunity to work with and help the families of Western New York. My Family Court responsibilities are surely an extension of the work that I've tried to do in the community over the years.

"The best way I can think of to show my appreciation for this award is to continue to do the things which have brought about this recognition to begin with, and I promise that I will continue to do so."

In introducing Battle, UB Law

Alumni Association President Phillip Brothman '62 noted, "Mike may be the only awardee to receive this honor while serving as an officer of the UB Law Alumni Association. (A board member of the association for three years, Battle then served as assistant treasurer and treasurer.) This is certainly indicative of the regard in which Mike is held by his peers."

And Brothman said the judge's extensive service on community boards means a tricky balancing act: committee meetings early in the morning, and skipping lunch most days.

John F. Canale '47, special counsel to the firm of Bouvier, O'Connor, was honored "for leadership by example as a private practitioner." Canale, a World War II veteran, is a well-known trial lawyer, past president of the Western New York Trial Lawyers Association and a former director of the Erie County Bar Association.

Canale spoke of Joseph Brodstein, his longtime partner: "As I look back on my years of practice, Joe Brodstein probably had a greater influence on me than anyone else in my career. He was the best trial lawyer that Western New York ever produced.

"There's a saying that the law is a cruel mistress, and I've found that to be true on occasion, especially in the process of trial preparation or in an actual trial. But the law has many rewards, and one of the greatest rewards as far as I'm concerned is the esteem and the respect of your peers and your colleagues at the bar. And by giving me this award tonight, you are telling me that I have that. I treasure that, and I will treasure this award for the rest of my life."

John H. Stenger '58, a former honoree for private practice and a member of the school's Dean's Advisory Council, said in introducing Canale: "John is truly an outstanding trial lawyer. He is one of my heroes. John Canale's life really epitomizes the American dream.

"John is justifiably proud that he and Joe Brodstein were partners for 25 years, all on a handshake, never with a written agreement. They had a wonderful relationship. John learned from a master and he became a master himself."

Hon. Joseph D. Mintz '56, a Supreme Court Justice in the Eighth Judicial District since 1979, was honored "for his conscientious and diligent performance in the judiciary." Mintz, an instructor in trial technique at the Law School, is a past president of the New York State Defenders Association and the Eighth Judicial District Association. He also serves on the New York State Supreme Court Judges Association's Committee on Civil Practice.

"1956 was a very good year," Mintz said in accepting the award. "That was the year I was married, the year I graduated from law school and the year I was admitted to the bar. When I graduated in 1956, it was beyond my wildest dreams or fantasies that I would ever become a justice of the proud court on which I serve, and secondly that I would ever be the recipient of this precious and prestigious award. I consider it the highest honor I have ever received, I will treasure it always, and I thank you. 1997 now ranks with 1956 as a very good year.

"It has been my privilege to be a lawyer for 41 years and a judge for 19 of those years. All I have done during that period of time is take the concepts, the thought processes, the ideals that I learned in the Law School and apply them to the practice of law and in judging. I really attempted to find what the problem is, research the law, hope that I understand it, and apply it."

Fellow Supreme Court Justice Vincent E. Doyle Jr. '56 introduced Mintz. "Joe Mintz, throughout his whole life, has developed a fine sense of justice," Doyle said. "He has been in the real world both as a citizen, a husband



and a father, as a lawyer, as a defender of indigents, and now as a judge. He has the knowledge of the law and a logical mind, and he has an additional quality that he needs in our job, that of compassion. Joe recognizes that we are all merely human."

Hon. Dennis C. Vacco '78, New York State attorney general, was hon-

"I am honored," Vacco said, "not just by the award you have bestowed upon me tonight, but by all of you who are here. There are so many lawyers who are outstanding examples of what UB represents in this community."

"It is very important to me where I come from. I am the first upstater to serve in this office in more than 70

years. I always am very concerned about mentioning where I come from. I grew up on a farm in southern Erie County. I was an assistant district attorney in Erie County, I was U.S. attorney for the Western District of New York, and I am a UB Law graduate. You cannot separate any one of those factors in my life from the decisions that I make on a daily basis on this job. Every place I go in this great state, I wear my UB Law degree on my sleeve."

Hon. M. Dolores Denman '65, presiding justice of the Appellate

York State to prevent doctor-assisted suicide, by all accounts was extremely well-prepared and well-received. Dennis has brought great credit to our alumni association and to our law school, and I can only believe that he will continue to enhance his own reputation — and through that the reputation of our law school which he represents so well."

Hon. Arthur O. Eve, a graduate of West Virginia State University, was the sole non-UB Law alumnus to be honored. Eve, deputy speaker of the New York State Assembly, was recognized "for outstanding service to the community by a non-alumnus."

"This is a very great honor," Eve said. "I want to give all praises first of all to God, who is head of my life. I thought of my mother and grandmother, who raised me. I thought about coming to the city and having a letter to live in the Y until I got a job and would pay them back for staying there. And then the Y told me there was no room for me and a family let me live with them until I got a job, and I stayed with them until I was drafted into the Korean War."

"I want to thank the UB Law alumni for this great award tonight. I will treasure it. I am indeed very appreciative and will always remember this evening for the rest of my life."

An old friend, University President William R. Greiner, introduced Eve: "He's passionate, he's dedicated, he's caring — especially so about those who are less fortunate. He's articulate, he's intelligent. He has one of the greatest public speaking voices that I have ever heard. He's a preacher at heart and by instinct. He's a Christian, born again and proud of it. He has a heart as big as a washtub and a temper to match."

"There are some people who seek to attain high office in order to do well. Arthur seeks to do good, and he's done so much of it over his career that I think it's entirely appropriate that he be the recipient of this award." ■



Left to right: Daniel M. Babcock '64, Stephen Babcock '97 and Edward F. Gibbons '37; Sherman F. Babcock '37, seated

ored "for his commitment to public service." In that office, he was instrumental in enacting "Megan's Law," requiring the registration of sex offenders, and helped to craft New York's death penalty law.

Division, 4th Department, said in introducing Vacco: "His performance as attorney general has enhanced the reputation of our law school. His argument in January 1997 in *Vacco vs. Quill* in the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing for New