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High Hopes: Four Women, Two Men Step up for Distinguished Alumni Awards

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Four women, two men step up for Distinguished Alumni Awards

This year, for the first time, women outnumbered men as recipients of Distinguished Alumni Awards from the UB Law Alumni Association. Four women and two men were so honored at the 39th annual awards dinner on May 10, 2001, in the Hyatt Regency Buffalo. They ranged from a distinguished jurist, to well-known attorneys in private and corporate practice, to a non-alumna who is a State University of New York trustee.

An enthusiastic audience—there were several standing ovations—and an entertaining slate of honorees added to the collegial spirit of the evening, hosted by outgoing alumni association President Patrick C. O'Reilly.

The awards were presented in six categories, reflecting the range of accomplishments and contributions of UB Law School alumni. Excerpts from the remarks of the honorees, and those who introduced them, follow.

The Hon. Barbara Howe ‘80, a New York State Supreme Court justice, was honored “for her conscientious and diligent performance in the judiciary.” A former Buffalo City Court judge, Howe holds a doctoral degree in sociology and teaches that subject at UB. She currently chairs the Erie County Executive’s Advisory Board on Alternatives to Incarceration, and also chairs The Women’s Group.

“Justice Howe is one of the hardest working jurists in the Eighth Judicial District,” said Hon. Vincent E. Doyle, that district’s administrative judge, in introducing her. “Her innovative ideas result in many settlements. Her gregarious nature and warm personality endear her to attorneys, litigants, jurors and spectators in her court. She does her job with enthusiasm, compassion, intelligence and common sense.”

Barbara Howe, a former president of the Law Alumni Association, spoke of her work with UB Law School’s ongoing oral history project, saying it gave her a heightened appreciation for the school’s long record of quality legal education. Of her tenure on the bench, she said: “I have the utmost respect for law as a vehicle to achieve justice in our society. It is a lucky thing to have new and unique challenges present themselves every day and to be paid to take on those challenges. I am uniquely blessed.”

Buffalo trial attorney Carl A. Green ‘50 was honored “for his leadership by example as a private practitioner.” Green, a founder and currently of counsel to the firm Lipsitz, Green, Fehringer, Roll, Salisbury & Cambria, has concentrated his practice in personal injury, civil litigation, construction accident law and toxic tort liability law. Among his other accomplishments, he was instrumental in achieving passage of legislation that permitted thousands of asbestos workers to pursue their claims through New York courts.

O'Reilly, the Law Alumni Association president, said of the honoree: “Carl is a litigator, and his skill in negotiating and trying cases in the personal injury field,
in the construction liability field and in other areas is well-known. But Carl's talent in the practice of law has gone well beyond just his mastery in the courtroom. His mission has been to mold social conscience with the development of a thriving and trend-setting personal injury practice."

Said Green, a model of brevity: "I have truly enjoyed the practice of law, and it is a little odd to be honored for having done nothing more than having enjoyed oneself for a long span of years. I have always had the feeling that honors should be reserved for those who have suffered and sacrificed, two things I have never been accused of having done. So I do feel a bit of guilt this evening, but beyond that I feel exceptionally pleased and grateful."

Solo practitioner Joseph F. Crangle '69 was honored "for his commitment to public service." The former chairman of the Erie County Democratic Party and a member of the Democratic National Committee, Crangle continues to be a force in Erie County politics. His board memberships include the Erie County Water Authority and the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo, and he served as special counsel to the Niagara Falls International Bridge Commission.

In introducing the honoree, Peter J. Fiorella Jr. said Crangle has shown extraordinary political acumen since the eighth grade, when he managed his sister's campaign for vice president of their class - and in the process was elected class president. Fiorella also quoted former Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan: "The final test of a leader and a great public servant is that he gives other men and women the conviction to carry on. Joe Crangle has left a multitude of leaders who continue today."

Crangle pointed with pride to the best aspects of political life - the conviction that one is seeing the democratic process in action. He also expressed appreciation to his law-school alma mater: "This award would not be possible without that kind of dedication and that kind of faculty we have had over the years at our law school."

"A well-respected member of the business community and the legal community" is how Alan S. Carrel described the next honoree, Linda J. Nenni '83. Nenni serves as vice president and general counsel of Kaleida Health, and helped guide Western New York's largest health care system through a period of consolidation and change. She was honored "for her exemplary achievements in business."

"Linda represents, for me, what an in-house attorney is and should be," Carrel said. "Linda works very hard to accomplish what she has accomplished. Two various cultures came together, and the result was Kaleida Health."

Nenni recognized several people who have helped her "along the way," and said: "The merger of hospital systems that Kaleida has created has afforded me the most exciting and challenging legal experiences of my career. It is a very distinct honor to be recognized by one's peers, and for that I am very grateful."

UB President William R. Greiner was the introducer for the next honoree, Pamela R. Jacobs. Jacobs received the Aaron N. Bloch Memorial Award, given "for outstanding service to the Law School and to the community by a non-alumna." A member of the State University of New York board of trustees, she was instrumental in establishing the Roswell Park Alliance, which works to ensure adequate funding for Buffalo's world-class cancer center.

Greiner recounted how Jacobs and two others came to him for advice out of concern for the future of Roswell Park, and then effectively lobbied in Albany for funding to pull the hospital out of a fiscal crisis. He also called her "our go-to person here in Western New York on the SUNY board of trustees."

"I am so proud to be on the dais with these great people," Jacobs said in her acceptance remarks. "I never passed the bar. I did not even take the bar. I did not go to law school. That is my unclaimed fame."

"But I admire all of you who have accomplished so much within your profession, in the city, state and worldwide through the Law School. Your pride in the Law School means a great deal to me."

Dean Nils Olsen introduced the final honoree of the evening, Washington, D.C., attorney Judith B. Ittig '71, who was honored "for her many contributions to the betterment of our community."

The dean spoke of Ittig's service as chair of the Dean's Advisory Council, a group of alumni who advise the dean and UB Law administrators in order to build the school's quality and ensure that its curriculum meets the demands of a changing legal climate.

"She is meticulously prepared, brimming with optimism concerning the Law School and the supportive and constructive role its alumni should play," Olsen said. "That optimism is catching."

Ittig, whose practice concentrates in the area of construction law, serves as an arbitrator and mediator for the American Arbitration Association in construction cases. "What I learned here still informs what I do," she told the audience. "It has always been my greatest honor to be a New York lawyer."

"I want to thank you so much for this chance to come back and publicly thank everybody who helped me have the career that I have today and the cases that I enjoy so much. I just cannot say how flattered and honored I am."