

10-1-2004

New York Alumni Hear Appeals Justice Wesley

UB Law Forum

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum

Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (2004) "New York Alumni Hear Appeals Justice Wesley," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 17 : No. 1 , Article 50.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol17/iss1/50

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Alumni Publications at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in UB Law Forum by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact lawscholar@buffalo.edu.

Alumni Association



Photo by Mickey Osterreicher '98

New York alumni hear appeals justice Wesley

UB Law School's biggest alumni chapter outside upstate New York came out in force Jan. 30 for the increasingly popular New York Alumni Luncheon. Held in the tony Union League Club, the event featured an address by Richard C. Wesley, justice of the U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit.

Wesley's connection with the school is a most personal one: His daughter Sarah is a current UB Law student.

And it was from that dual perspective

— as a jurist and a father — that Wesley spoke of UB Law's mission as New York State's only public law school.

"Why is it that people choose the University at Buffalo?" he asked. "Some of you grew up in Buffalo, some of you are from Western New York, some of you want to be closer to home, but some of you came here because of cost and quality. You were able to obtain a high-quality legal education without going bankrupt. The choice is between \$17,000 a year and \$37,000 a year. The choice is between mortgaging your life and hav-

ing choices in life. The choice for many people is having any choice at all."

He said his daughter's experience as a student reflects some of the changes that have taken place in the profession since he went through his own legal training in the early 1970s.

"When I entered the Cornell Law School, there were seven women in a class of 150," Wesley said. "In one generation, from mine to my daughter's, women now occupy more than 50 percent of the law school entrants at many law schools. It is unbelievable to me that

we were a profession, at the time when I entered it, that did not give women a fair shake.”

In addition, he said, Sarah did what an increasing number of new law students are doing – she entered law school after working for a time after college, in her case in a prosecutor’s office working with crime victims.

“It is right that we should have publicly funded higher education in the

A 1974 graduate of Cornell Law School, Judge Wesley first joined the law firm of Harris, Beach & Wilcox, then joined Welch, Streb and Porter where he became a partner in 1977. In 1979, Wesley was appointed assistant counsel to Assembly Republican Leader James L. Emery. For the next four years, he managed Assemblyman Emery’s legislative programs, con-

In 1994, Gov. Mario Cuomo appointed Judge Wesley to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court for the Fourth Department. Gov. George Pataki then nominated Judge Wesley to the Court of Appeals, and he was confirmed by a unanimous vote of the New York State Senate in January 1997. On March 5, 2003, President Bush nominated Wesley to the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals.

Vice Dean Alan S. Carrel updated the school’s New York City alumni on recent developments at the Law School, saying that major strides in quality have come about largely through the efforts of Dean Nils Olsen Jr. and with the support of the alumni.

“The alumni are really why we have been able to accomplish what we have been able to accomplish,” Carrel said. “A law school program of this quality, with strong faculty, extensive course selection, upgraded technology and small class sizes, is expensive to provide. The state’s contribution does not come close to allowing us to provide many of these things. It is the \$700,000 that you are contributing annually to the Law School, and the \$12 million that we raised recently in our capital campaign, that are really allowing us to do what we are doing.”

Among the key points of progress Carrel pointed to were “a rigorous and highly effective Research and Writing curriculum”; January bridge courses “taught by giants in the profession”; a working courtroom that “distinguishes us from every other law school in the country”; and a heightened emphasis on recruiting quality students, resulting in a 40 percent increase in applications last year.

“I love walking out of my office and talking to students,” Carrel said. “I ask them how they are doing at the Law School. They are so happy there, and they cannot talk enough about the things that are happening. Everyone seems to think they are part of a very good law school that is just getting better.”



Law Alumni Association President Terrance P. Flynn '88 and Hon. Julio M. Fuentes '75, U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, converse at the New York City luncheon.

law,” said Wesley, who was a New York State Court of Appeals judge before being elevated to the federal bench last year. “It is right because so many of us come from humble backgrounds and the public university is the only pathway upward. It is right that the University at Buffalo Law School should maintain its commitment to all New Yorkers, whether they be black or white or Latino, of all colors. There is room in the inn for all of us.

“But right now there is truly only one door. And so as we sit on Park Avenue in Manhattan, the greatest city in the world in what I think is the greatest state in the world, let us take pride in the fact that the University at Buffalo has fulfilled its responsibility. Let us take pride in the fact that you – and now I, through my daughter – will share a commitment to excellence and a commitment to availability that should never be wavered from.”

stituent services and district office. In 1982, Wesley was elected to the New York State Assembly for the 136th Assembly District, and was re-elected in 1984 without opposition.

In 1986, he was elected to a 14-year term as a justice of the Supreme Court, in the Seventh Judicial District, which includes all of Monroe, Wayne, Livingston, Ontario, Seneca, Cayuga, Steuben and Yates Counties. In 1988, Wesley set up the Trial Assistance Part that provided additional trial parts in Supreme Court in Monroe County to reduce the backlog of cases that had developed. Judge Wesley has also served as the Administrator of the Judicial Hearing Officer Program in the Seventh Judicial District.

In January of 1991, he was appointed supervising judge of the criminal courts in the Seventh Judicial District, overseeing the operation of 280 criminal courts in an eight-county area.