Gift to Law School Supports Scholarships for Students with Public-Service Dreams

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A beloved son, a revered uncle, a cherished brother. Irene Ebert and her family wanted to honor her son, Frederick C. Ebert, who dedicated his legal career to public service, so they established an endowment at the University at Buffalo Law School to fund scholarships for law students committed to doing the same.

Ebert, 55, died unexpectedly while at work in 2001. A 1986 graduate of the Law School, he was a "dedicated and highly regarded" attorney in the Oneida County Public Defender's Office, "a gentle man who was a true workhorse," according to his boss, Frank J. Nebush. "If there was a problem he was there to help. His death left a large void in our office."

Ebert's mother recalls, "He would sometimes call and ask me to bring a clean shirt and tie to the courthouse, so he could give it to a defendant and allow him to look more presentable on the stand. His commitment to his clients was unwavering."

Thanking the Ebert family for its generosity, Dean Nils Olsen said, "Not only have you eloquently remembered your son and brother, but you have done so in a way that captures the essence of his professional commitment and encourages others who wish to follow the dream of serving the public's interest."

The Frederick C. Ebert Scholarship will be awarded to students who have shown a strong commitment to public service and plan to serve in the public interest following graduation from law school. The scholarship guidelines state that the recipient must also have substantial prior work experience and be "pursuing a law degree in an effort to either advance an existing career or to make a career change." The student also must be in good academic standing and have demonstrated financial need.

After graduating from Ithaca College in 1968, Ebert served in the 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. "He didn't talk much about the war, but throughout the rest of his life," says Mrs. Ebert, "Fred always had extra money in his wallet in case he came across a Vietnam vet who needed help."

In 1970, he returned to school, earning an MBA from New York University. He worked at Sperry Univac, Inc. and Burns Personnel, Inc. before entering UB Law School. He joined the Oneida County Public Defender's Office in 1988 and at the time of his death was serving as first assistant public defender in the violent-crimes area.

Additions to the Frederick C. Ebert Scholarship Fund continue to be accepted, and may be sent to the UB Law School, c/o Deborah Scott, 408 O'Brian Hall, Amherst, NY 14260.