

7-1-1979

## A Salute to Joe Laufer

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### Recommended Citation

Charles S. Desmond, *A Salute to Joe Laufer*, 28 Buff. L. Rev. 447 (1979).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/buffalolawreview/vol28/iss3/4>

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## A SALUTE TO JOE LAUFER

HON. CHARLES S. DESMOND\*

Two decades of law teaching at SUNY was, for Joe Laufer, twenty years of reaching into the hearts and minds of his students. To him, as to Anatole France, "the whole act of teaching" was "the act of awakening the human curiosity." Part of his knack was to project himself and his love of the law across the edge of the podium and straight into the sometimes reluctant consciousnesses of the neophytes in front of him.

As a law school's development and prestige enlarge its enrollment, the distance between faculty and students must, also, widen a little. So the effective law teacher continually reminds himself that he "affects eternity," that he "can never tell where his influence stops." But he knows where it starts. To him the study of so prosaic a subject as torts is more than a dull and necessary chore, more than a numbered line in the catalog. Before his classes he reminds himself that every student (or nearly every one) came to the school with a pocketful of dreams, with a vague belief that he or she could somehow light up the legal sky, and that it was up to him, as a teacher, to show the student that those dull and dusty texts and case citations recorded the endless quest for order and justice, the tireless effort of forgotten lawyers and judges to adapt the law's slow meanderings to the harms and hurts that bedevil people.

It takes not only learning but love to see and teach the law that way. Joe Laufer did, and we salute him for it.

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