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# Alumni Association

## Jaeckle Award goes to Hon. Ann T. Mikoll '54



Dean Nils Olsen



Professor William R. Greiner



Grace Marie Ange '57

A pioneering judge with a heart for Polonia was the 2004 recipient of the Edwin F. Jaeckle Award, the highest honor given by the Law School and the UB Law Alumni Association. Hon. Ann T. Mikoll '54, who retired in 1999 from her position in the Appellate Division of State Supreme Court, was honored at an Oct. 30 luncheon. The award was presented by William R. Greiner, law professor and former president of the University at Buffalo.

Mikoll made history in 1977 as the first woman elected to serve on a New York appellate court. Previously, she had served as assistant corporation counsel for the City of Buffalo; as a Buffalo City Court judge for 14 years; and as a two-term Supreme Court justice.

She also has been a longtime advocate of the arts and Polish culture, and has helped produce two operas by Polish composers. She currently serves as president of the Chopin Singing Society, the largest Polonian choir, now celebrating its 102nd year.

In 1998, Mikoll was elected to the Western New York Women's Hall of Fame.

Law School Dean Nils Olsen called Mikoll "a genuine, sincere humanitarian who cares about people and enjoys helping them first and foremost." He also cited her work on the Dean's Advisory Council: "She has a gift for focusing on the heart of the matter and for making her points in a clear, insightful manner. Being with her is always enjoyable and educational. She is an alumna whose commitment to the Law School has been extraordinary and

whose assistance has been exceptional."

Grace Marie Ange '57, a partner in Ange & Ange, told of the shepherding she received from Mikoll when Ange arrived in City Court as a bewildered newly admitted lawyer. "She did not laugh at me. She calmed me down and told me what to do. And from that day forward, this has endeared Ann to me forever."

Mikoll's election to the State Supreme Court in 1971 was "really momentous," Ange said. "That meant a lot. It meant a lot to women. There were very few women lawyers at that time, and of the women lawyers, there were very few who got into the courtroom. When Ann got elected to Supreme Court, there were a lot of women who were elated by that."

The honoree, she said, "knew that law was not a theory. It was not some abstract idea. Anything judges decide has a real impact on flesh-and-blood people, and she brought that to her position as a judge during all these years.

"Most of all I think of her as a loyal, supportive friend. Her friendship is very inclusive. She has friends whom



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such a wonderful place to produce lawyers  
for the future.”*

*– Honorable Ann T. Mikoll '54*

she has had for years. She does not drop friends when they are no longer able to do anything for her. She is a genuine friend.”

In presenting the award, Greiner cited a time in the early 1980s when Mikoll brought a group of advocates to the University and pushed for better ties with Buffalo's ethnic communities. That led, he said, to programs in Polish language and literature, “then an exchange program with Jagiellonian University in Krakow that has blossomed into an extraordinary set of relationships with Eastern Europe. It helped to open our University to be the international institution it is today.”

Expressing gratitude for the award, Mikoll remembered that there were only six women in her graduating class, “and I was the only one to go on and practice law. Today the Law School is a totally different institution. As a member of the Dean's Advisory Council for the last two years, I have been privy to the progress of the Law School from that of my day to an outstanding professional institution of which we can all be exceedingly proud. The school is such a nurturing place, such a wonderful place to produce lawyers for the future. We, the legal community, should play a continuous role in helping to pave the way for next generation of lawyers at this school through our support.”

About her life in the legal profession, Mikoll said: “Our profession is the conscience of the community. It is the community which seeks from us the only earthly justice they can get in the very complicated and myriad problems that confront them. We must continue to be the glue that holds the democratic and capitalistic system together. We need to propel the wheels of justice forward to meet the ever-changing circumstances and dynamics of life.”

She also advised her fellow attorneys to “sustain an inner fire and commitment. We need to hold on to a clarity of purpose as to our obligation and our passion for justice. We hold a very significant place in God's plan for society, and to successfully fulfill that role, we need to remain lawyers and judges who care, who listen carefully, who practice law and dispense justice with courage unencumbered by considerations that debase our professional judgment.”