4-1-2010

Ken Forrest Accepts the Jaeckle Award

UB Law Forum

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

Recommended Citation


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.
THE SPIRIT OF ’76
Ken Forrest accepts the Jaeckle Award amid classmates, colleagues and kin

New York City’s elegant Union League Club was the setting, but the people were the real stars as the UB Law Alumni Association took to the road to present the 33rd Edwin E. Jaeckle Award to Kenneth B. Forrest ’76.

The Jan. 29 event was part of the annual New York City Alumni Luncheon, and a room packed with Forrest’s fellow UB Law alumni, colleagues from his firm Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz, and family members and friends witnessed the presentation of the UB Law School and the UB Law Alumni Association’s highest honor.

A partner at Wachtell, Lipton since 1982, Forrest concentrates his practice in commercial litigation. He was a founding member of the Dean’s Advisory Council and is one of the school’s most dedicated and involved alumni.

After opening remarks by UBLAA President Robert L. Boreanaz ’89 and Dean’s Advisory Council chair Tom Black ’79, Dean Makau W. Mutua noted that both Forrest and his wife, Ellen, whom he met at UB Law, were top-flight students, saying, “I am told Ken and Ellen were neck-and-neck in terms of their academic achievements in law school.” He also cited Mrs. Forrest’s work as board chair of the Vincent Smith School, stating that the school may have described her best: “Ellen is an attorney by trade and a philanthropist by heart.”

The dean said of Ken Forrest, “First and foremost, his colleagues describe Ken as a fabulous litigator, tremendously skilled in both oral and written advocacy. As they put it, Ken is a litigator whom anyone would want to have on their team.”

At the Law School, Mutua said, Forrest has chaired the Dean’s Advisory Council and he remains one of its most active and helpful members, providing advice and counsel to four deans. Mutua noted that, as chair, Forrest restructured meetings of the Council to allow for more discussion and debate, and helped recruit new members for the advisory body. “He does not speak the most or even often,” Mutua said, “but when he does, people listen very carefully. With quiet confidence and in a few short sentences, Ken can get a meeting back on track by reminding other people why they are there.”

Standing ovation greeted the honoree, who began his remarks with a memory. “The year was 1973,” Forrest said, “and I had this orange, non-air-conditioned old Plymouth Duster. I took the eight-hour drive from Brooklyn to Buffalo to attend UB Law School, and I knew that I was part of the first class to attend the school in a new building on a new campus. I pulled up, and in front of me I saw the world’s largest vacant lot. This was 1,200 acres of a construction site with two buildings, a dorm and a law school, and there was a rope so you wouldn’t get blown away walking from one to the other. I looked at this huge, empty, vast, pretty disgusting-looking expanse, and I said to myself, what exactly did you do? “So I took a deep breath, made the decision, drove in, and my life was soon transformed both professionally and personally.”

Forrest was generous in his thanks to his colleagues at Wachtell, Lipton, praising the firm’s “devotion to giving to the community”; to the Law School’s current and previous administrations, which he said have grown the school despite severe financial constraints; and his friends and family, especially “the rock of my family,” his wife, Ellen. “She was by far the best outcome of my decision to continue driving into that vast empty campus in 1973,” he said.

A video of the Jaeckle Award presentation is available at www.youtube.com/UBLawSchool.

Colleagues describe Ken as a fabulous litigator, tremendously skilled.
— Dean Mutua

Forrest family, left to right: Daughter Kimberly, Kenneth ’76, son Craig and wife Ellen ’76.