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A Former Dean Moves On: Professor Filvaroff, Civil Rights Advocate, Transitions to Retirement

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Faculty

A former dean moves on

Professor Filvaroff, civil rights advocate, transitions to retirement

Before joining UB Law School in 1988 as its 15th dean, David B. Filvaroff already had a broad career in the law. He had been in private practice, was a law clerk at the U.S. Supreme Court, served as a high-ranking adviser in the U.S. Department of Justice and had been on the law school faculties at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Texas.

Throughout Professor Filvaroff's career, two constants have remained: his love of teaching and his commitment to advancing civil rights.

"It gives me great pleasure to look back on my 40 years as a teacher, half of them here at UB," says Filvaroff, who is transitioning into retirement by reducing his teaching load to part time. "UB Law students are very smart, and they get smarter and more sophisticated all the time. I enjoy challenging students and having them challenge me. I know I'll miss the excitement I feel every time I walk into the classroom."

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At UB, Filvaroff has taught torts, international law, civil rights, federal courts, constitutional law and international human rights.

He came to UB from the University of Texas School of Law, succeeding Wade J. Newhouse as dean and occupied the post for four years before returning to full-time teaching.

"I was attracted to Buffalo for a variety of reasons," he explains. "Chief among them was the quality of the law faculty and its breadth of interests and willingness to challenge orthodoxy; its emphasis on the role of law in society; and not least of all, the diversity within the faculty and the student body.

"It has been satisfying to witness the increasing presence of women and students of color in the classroom," says Filvaroff,

commenting on changes which have occurred since he began teaching in the 1960s. "Law schools and legal education have changed – all for the better – as the U.S. Supreme Court recognized in a recent case involving the University of Michigan Law School. It is not surprising that Buffalo was an early leader in bringing these changes about."

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It was during Filvaroff's deanship that the Dean's Advisory Council was created. The purpose was to establish a forum for continuing communication with bench and bar. "We wanted to bring together a group of outstanding lawyers and judges who, along with our alumni association, could give us the benefit of their advice," says Filvaroff. "It helps to bring the practitioner's point of view very usefully and visibly to the Law School."

An economics major as an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin, Filvaroff was a 1958 magna cum laude graduate of Harvard Law School, where he served on the *Law Review*. He practiced with a Cleveland law firm for four years and then served as law clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justices Felix Frankfurter and Arthur Goldberg.

Following his clerkship in 1963, Filvaroff joined the Department of Justice as special assistant to the deputy attorney general. After the assassination of President Kennedy and the subsequent resignation of Robert Kennedy as head of the Justice Department, Filvaroff became special assistant to the acting attorney general.

Filvaroff spent nearly all of the next year working on what was to become the Civil Rights Act of 1964. "It was exciting to participate in the shaping of the bill and to work with the Congress to get it passed," says Filvaroff.

"There is often a tendency to romanticize the past. I try not to," he says. "But at



that time, and even now, I feel very privileged to have been able to work on such significant legislation."

The resulting landmark act – the first major federal civil rights legislation since the Civil War – outlawed discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex and national origin in employment, in places of



public accommodation (such as hotels, motels, restaurants, and theaters), and in federally funded programs. It also established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to enforce its provisions.

In retirement, he says, "I have a good deal of reading that I want and need to catch up on. And I want to review what has

been happening in constitutional and international law in the midst of the war on terror and to assess the effects on fundamental rights."

He and his wife, Nancy Tobin, hope to travel widely, including trips to San Francisco and Chicago, to visit grandchildren.

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— Professor Emeritus

David B. Filvaroff