

## A Visit with the Doyles

Paul Reidinger, '85

In 1985 the Law School received a generous gift: an endowed Professorship, anonymously funded, but named in honor of Ruth and James Doyle of Madison. Ruth Doyle is a former state Assemblywoman and Dane County Supervisor; she also worked in the Law School for ten years from 1969 to 1979, as Assistant to the Dean and Financial Aids Officer. James Doyle is Senior District Judge for the US District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin. Both are natives of Wisconsin and graduates of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The Professorship that bears their name was recently awarded by Chancellor Irving Shain to Neil K. Komesar, a member of the U.W. Law School faculty since 1971. In addition to the prestige of having a Professorship in the name of the Doyles, the recipient will receive yearly a designated amount of the income from the \$125,000 gift to use on scholarly and teaching projects.

I visited the Doyles on a bleak, unseasonably cold winter day. Their home is modest and unassuming, filled not with expensive technology and imported furniture but with books and pictures—artifacts of a long and interesting life spent together.

The Doyles met as undergraduates in Madison in the mid-1930's. After they graduated—both took degrees in history—they went off to Columbia University in New York City, where he attended law school and she earned a master's degree in history and education. They were married in 1940.

Mrs. Doyle is a petite woman with reddish-blond hair. She looks little different from the way she did in newspaper photographs of her taken 35 years ago, when she represented Madison in the Assembly, or thirty years ago, when she was a member of the Dane County Board of Supervisors. One difference I notice between the person and the pictures of her (I have been glancing through the clippings) is in her eyes: Mrs.



Doyle's, face to face, are bright, alert, inquisitive. She is curious about what goes on around her; the eyes announce that right away.

The judge is recovering from surgery on his mouth and speaks slowly and carefully so that I can understand him. If there is a problem, Mrs. Doyle sets me straight. I am curious why in 1947 they returned to live in Wisconsin having spent almost ten successful years in the East. After leaving Columbia and New York, the Doyles moved to Washington, D.C. in 1940, where he worked in the Department of Justice and clerked for Justice Byrnes of the U.S. Supreme Court. During the war, Mrs. Doyle worked in a battery factory while the judge served in the Naval Reserve. When the war ended, they spent one more year in Washington—the judge worked as Assistant to the Counselor in the State Department—before coming home. What drew them?

"We like it here," says the judge with a small smile.

"We missed pine trees and lakes," she adds.



Whatever brought them back, there is no question that their return to Wisconsin has been a great benefit to the state. Their careers here have largely been public ones, and they have made a point, it seems, of giving themselves to public service.

"I'm a politician," says Mrs. Doyle simply, and the list of her activities over the past forty years bears her out. Apart from two brief stints teaching high school—in Lake Mills, 1939-40, and in Oregon, 1957-59—she has served in the Assembly, on the Dane County Board of Supervisors, and on the Madison Board of Education. Although a few of her campaigns have been unsuccessful, Mrs. Doyle's political career is evidence not only of her skill and appeal as a candidate for public office, but also of her determination to prove the point that women are equal.

The judge's career seems, on paper at least, more serene. He too, however, has been politically active. Along with Gaylord Nelson, John Reynolds and a few others, the judge is credited with building the modern Democratic Party in Wis-

consin. After seventeen years of private practice in Madison—during which he also taught classes at the Law School in contracts, conflicts, property and domestic relations—Doyle was appointed to the federal bench in 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson. There he has been ever since: as District Judge, as Chief Judge from 1978 to 1980, and as Senior District Judge since 1980.

But, in fact, things haven't been all that quiet in Judge Doyle's court. In the late 1960's and early 1970's particularly, a time of considerable unrest around the country and in Madison, brought some momentous (and therefore difficult) cases before Judge Doyle. In *Soglin v. Kauffman*, a case that arose out of student pro-

test over Dow Chemical's interviewing students on the UW campus, the judge held that the University's rules for disciplining students were unconstitutionally broad and vague. In *Groppi v. Lesley*, he granted habeas corpus to Father James Groppi, who, after leading a protest in the State Legislature, was cited for contempt and summarily imprisoned. The Supreme Court of Wisconsin had voted unanimously to keep Groppi in jail. Judge Doyle ordered him released. His decision was reversed by the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit but reinstated by the U.S. Supreme Court, Chief Justice Burger writing a unanimous opinion. These decisions, and many others, split an uncertain community, but the

uproar did not prevent Judge Doyle from deciding subsequent hard cases as he thought they ought to be decided, nor upset the equanimous tone of his opinions.

I wonder aloud what the Doyles think of Madison, of the University, after all these years. There is no hesitation as they both tell me how much they love the School, the City, how much it has meant to them to be here.

No further elaboration seems necessary. The Judge must be off to court; he finds me my coat and tells me to feel free to call if I want to talk some more. I thank Mrs. Doyle and she tells me the same thing. As I walk out the front door I see the Judge driving off in his Escort.

## Notes on Alums

**Newell Lamb** ('35) has retired from the Newton, Ill., County Circuit Court after 42 years of continuous service. Newell decided to step down from his judgeship and not file for the Republican primary for the first time since 1944.

**Gaylord Nelson** ('42), governor of Wisconsin and U.S. Senator for 18 years, received an Honorary Doctor of Law in May. Nelson is currently counselor of the Wilderness Society.

**William F. Dolson** ('56) has been named Associate Dean at the University of Louisville School of Law.

**Robert L. Habush** ('61) has been elected president of the Association of Trial Lawyers of America.

The Greater La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce presented **Terry Gillette** ('64) with their 1986 President's Award. Terry is credited with taking the La Crosse Garment Manufacturing Co. out of bankruptcy proceedings and turning it into The Country Store, a successful mail order marketer.

### Obituaries

**Frank Wickhem** ('27), retired California Superior Court Judge, died May 21. He was 85.

Frank was appointed to the Superior Court by Gov. Edmund G. "Pat" Brown in 1964. He served in the Pasadena branch of the court until retirement in 1976.

He is survived by two children, Patrick F. and Patricia Ann Wickhem, and three grandchildren.

**Ted Harris** ('56) died March 28 at his home in Caledonia, Wis. He was 60.

Ted received the Coretta S. King award for his services in civil rights. He was a Golden Heritage member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and a member of the Wisconsin State Bar Association.

Ted is survived by his wife Nancy; a son, Brian; and his mother, Erma.