

Froehlke Receives 1990 Distinguished Service Award

[Editor's Note: At the 47th Annual Law School Spring Program last April, Robert Froehlke ('49) received the Law School's highest alumni award. He becomes the 45th recipient since the award began in 1967.]

Presentation by Harry Franke ('49)

Earlier this year I had a call from Ed Reisner with the good news. Bob Froehlke had been selected as the recipient of the Wisconsin Law Alumni Association's Annual Distinguished Service Award. In an unusual display of bad judgment, Bob had suggested me to be the presenter. Ed closed our conversation by indicating they would send me some information about Bob which would support the selection.

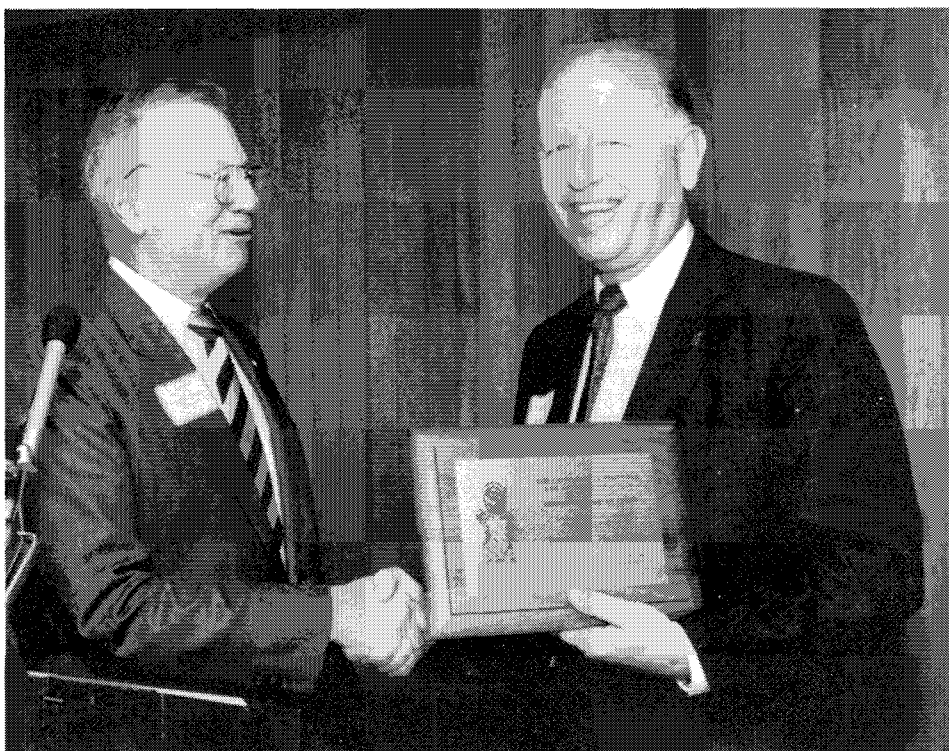
A few days later I received two documents. One was the Fall edition of the *Gargoyle* which contained last year's presentation to Chief Justice Heffernan by the Honorable John Reynolds. There was a penciled note—"This will give you the idea!" Much to my surprise, the opening paragraph fit like a glove.

It is an honor for me to be called upon to present this Distinguished Service Award to. . . [We] have been close friends for over a half a century. We have gone to school together, we worked together, we travelled together, we drank together, and, most importantly of all, we solved the problems of the world together. Therefore, what I have to say today is not objective but it is truthful.

Reynolds then goes on to talk about the intellectual brilliance and enthusiastic tenacity of his subject. Well, that left me to pursue another tack.

The other document concerned the 1990 Distinguished Service Award. It contained a listing of past recipients from 1967 through 1989 and what giants they were.

However, there was a simple paragraph as to the criteria for selection itemizing the ways that there could be "An outstanding contribution to the profession." While it appears that any one of the categories would suffice, to my pleasant surprise, Bob qualified in four of the five possible categories.



Harry Franke (l.) and Robert Froehlke (r.)

First, as a Practitioner. Bob was with the McDonald firm here in Madison for a couple of years and then counsel for Sentry Insurance Company in Stevens Point.

Next is Faculty Member. Bob and I both served on the faculty here for a relatively short period of time along with one Jack DeWitt.

The next category in Government Service. I doubt our Law School has had a more distinguished graduate in the military. Not only has Bob served as an Assistant Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Army, but his picture and plaque appear in the Infantry School Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Next, we have the rather difficult requirement—graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School. Bob did that with flying colors among them being the Order of the Coif.

The next qualification is also one that I can vouch for. The recipient must be

over 65 years of age. Since I am exactly two days older than Bob, I am aware that he meets this requirement.

Our profession can be proud of Bob Froehlke who has accepted the Chairmanship of "Campaign For Wisconsin," the first major capital campaign in the history of our University (this is not limited to the Law School) with the goal of some 300 million dollars. Let me give you an example of the type of "quiet leader" this man is.

Several months ago Brent Ruppel, Chairman of Robert W. Baird & Co., and loyal Wisconsin Alum, inquired of me as to the possibility of getting Bob Froehlke to serve as Chair for "Campaign for Wisconsin." While I was somewhat skeptical to Bob's availability, I encouraged him to do so and Brent made a trip with some others to Minneapolis to meet with Bob. Subsequently, Brent reported that the trip had been a success although Bob felt that

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they should be seeking the services of some person with greater stature and a bigger wallet.

What follows may be of some embarrassment to Bob, but I am going to tell it anyway. A few weeks ago Brent advised me that Bob Froehlke had explained to him that before he could go out and ask other people for money, Bob felt that he should set an example. Therefore, although not a wealthy individual himself, he has made arrangements through the purchase of joint insurance policies upon his life and Nancy's for a gift of one million dollars to the University of Wisconsin.

The last item on this list—and of course it is not essential to qualify here is—"That you be deceased." Well, Bob Froehlke is very much alive, however I think it is appropriate that we do pay tribute to him here today.

Response by Robert Froehlke ('49)

I am honored and pleased to accept this award. It is a touch discouraging, however, to observe that those who know me best are the most surprised that I am this year's recipient. I confess that I, too, was surprised and a bit mystified when Cliff Thompson notified me of the award. My first reaction was that must have been some cocktail party before the vote was taken. I am not a practicing attorney, a judge or a professor. Why me?

Then I looked at the previous recipients. Joseph Davies, Nat Heffernan, Irv Charne, Carl Runge, John Reynolds and on and on. Timing is everything. It was time for a Republican—in spite of the fact that he is just a businessman!

This award has added allure because my friend of over half a century, Harry Franke, made the presentation. Our initial contact was at the first Badger Boys State in 1939. Ever since we, or at least I, have looked forward to a chuckle and camaraderie whenever Nancy and I get

together with Harry and Mary. They cause me to hope that I am judged by the friends I keep!

Affairs like this are very nostalgic. Looking back I fear that at the time I graduated my appreciation of the law school and the friends I made while there was insufficient. Today I can assure you that I am most appreciative of both. Both wear very well. I'll never forget Herbie Page, not because of his erudite presentation of Contracts and Wills, but his fantastic knowledge of baseball history and his very great appreciation of women—particularly pretty women. At that time "lecherous old man" came to mind. Today as I rapidly approach that age I look upon him much more kindly. He understood the important things in life!

Ray Brown made Constitutional Law a thrilling subject that still excites me. Howard Hall always had the best students in his class because you always got your law school average in his courses. Dick Effland was the baby of the faculty but he was an outstanding teacher and a very considerate human. And any recitation of faculty must include Willard Hurst. A mind that has few, if any equals, a teacher who could excite and motivate like few I have ever encountered.

The student body was special. Most were close enough to be called a friend—and many still are today. You could always tell in which service the student served because we all wore our military garb. As contrasted to pre-war school, law school was approached more seriously. We matured in the "big war" and school was now more of a job than the pre-war fun and games. The one major drawback was the paucity of female students. (Maybe that is why we treated school more like a job.)

Most of the law students were married. We referred to the students' spouses as wives in those days because they all were. Nancy kept a full-time job, while doing all of the chores of a housewife and didn't neglect any of the duties of a new bride! I know I am not alone in feeling that the eventual law degree is held in joint tenancy with my wife.

So far I hope my comments have fallen into the "sweetness and light" category. I still have a great respect for the profession and yet, as a businessman, I do have a non-attorney perspective. I want to share two concerns I have for our profession. Unfortunately, I do not have any answers but I do know that the most important step in coming up with

answers is to get those involved to recognize the problem.

The legal profession today does not have the respect it had when I graduated from this law school. I do not know whether this is merely a perception problem or if it is more serious. Regardless, I know that no profession can flourish and, more importantly, serve the public adequately, if it doesn't have public support. I believe the time has come for law school faculty, the bar association and each individual lawyer to make an in-depth study of the profession today. Are lawyers today more interested in money than service? More interested in self than client? Less interested in high professional standards?

My second concern is the propensity of society to become increasingly litigious. The question no longer is to sue or not to sue. It is a foregone conclusion we are going to sue. The question is who has the deepest pockets. This is not just an insurance man talking (I am no longer in the insurance business.) This is a citizen saying civility has lessened in our society when the legal profession appears to be saying the answer to every unfortunate occurrence is a lawsuit. And these lawsuits are increasingly expensive, stressful, acrimonious and dilatory.

In spite of my concerns about the profession, when asked to name my occupation in the inevitable questionnaire, I still state "attorney." True, I have been a fallen away lawyer for over 30 years. Nevertheless, I believe my law training has been a very important ingredient in any success I have had. It has taught me the importance of distinguishing the crucial facts from the minutia of a situation; applying these facts to the appropriate principles involved; concern for the individual and his inalienable rights; respect for the law, and recognition that ethical conduct is the foundation of any profession. This school has provided us a solid education and ethical foundation. For that we are in its debt.

At the risk of turning this podium into a bully pulpit, I would like to suggest that in the near future we can begin to repay that debt. As National Chairman for the upcoming University of Wisconsin Capital Fund Drive, I urge you to give your support to "Campaign Wisconsin" when it is officially announced this fall.

I conclude where I began. I am very proud of this law school and this university. That makes this award all the more meaningful. I thank you very much.