

That Time When Ray Eckstein Guarded George Mikan

People know Ray Eckstein, L'49, and his wife, Kay, Speech '49, for being among the most generous donors in Marquette University history. Their landmark donations include \$51 million for construction of the Law School building, which opened in 2010 and is named in their honor. And earlier this year, the university announced that the Ecksteins have pledged \$10 million, as a matching challenge, toward the construction of a new undergraduate dormitory, to be named after Rev. Robert A. Wild, S.J., former Marquette University president.

But if you ask Ray Eckstein, he will tell you, "My claim to fame was to play basketball against George Mikan."

Eckstein grew up in Cassville, in southwestern Wisconsin, and was a basketball standout in high school at Campion Academy, the Jesuit school in nearby Prairie du Chien. That led to playing for Marquette.

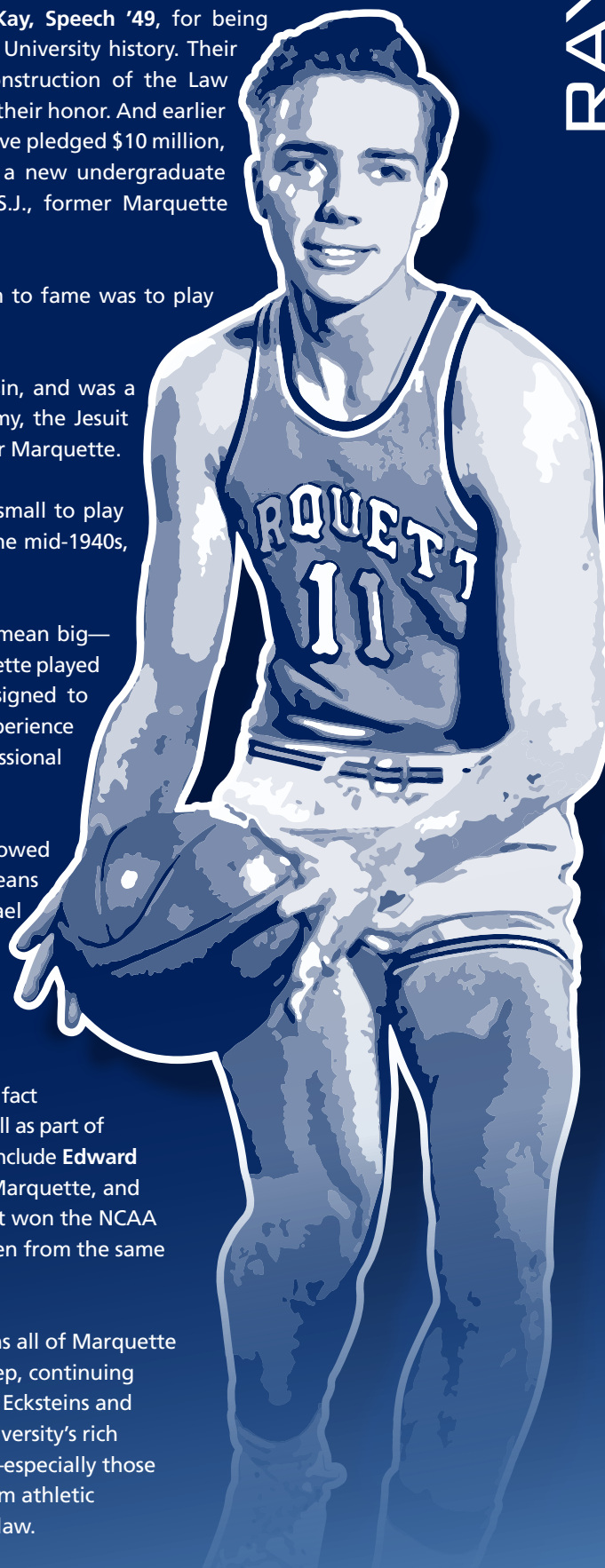
By today's standards, Eckstein probably would be too small to play at the college level—5 feet 11 inches. But, he says, in the mid-1940s, there weren't many players over 6 feet tall.

Mikan was a big—and, at 6 feet 10 inches tall, we do mean big—exception. He played for DePaul University. When Marquette played DePaul, Eckstein was one of two or three players assigned to guard him—at the same time. Eckstein said that the experience with Mikan, who went on to be one of the first professional basketball superstars, stays with him.

A few years ago, his children made donations that allowed Eckstein to play in a charity golf tournament in New Orleans in a foursome that included basketball legend Michael Jordan. Eckstein said Jordan wanted to know how good Mikan really was. The answer: "He was good—but not as good as you."

As Marquette celebrates the 100th anniversary of its intercollegiate basketball program, let us take note of the fact that at least 40 Marquette lawyers played varsity basketball as part of their Marquette experience. In addition to Eckstein, they include **Edward "Boops" Mullen, L'36**, the first All-American player for Marquette, and **Ulice Payne, L'82**, a member of the Marquette team that won the NCAA championship in 1977. The ranks also include two women from the same law class (L'91): **Patrice A. Baker** and **Susan C. Schill**.

The Law School joins all of Marquette in expressing its deep, continuing appreciation to the Ecksteins and in honoring the university's rich basketball history—especially those who have gone from athletic courts to courts of law.



RAY
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