

alumni awards

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—Dean Joseph D. Kearney

Marquette University bestowed alumni awards on a number of Law School graduates this past April. Wylie A. Aitken, L'65, received the Law Alumni Association's Lifetime Achievement Award. Judith Kochis Drinka, L'75, won the Association's Alumnus of the Year Award. Gregory J. Heller, L'96, received the Sports Law Alumnus of the Year Award. And James A. Wynn, Jr., L'79, received the University's Alumni Merit Award for Professional Achievement. These awards were presented at a series of receptions or dinners over the course of several days. What follows is an attempt to give a flavor of the various events.

Remarks of Dean Joseph D. Kearney at Law Alumni Awards Conferral, April 22, 2004

This is a special night for me. It is my first awards event as dean of the Marquette Law School, and I am privileged and honored to present tonight's awards to three of our graduates.

As dean, I'm often asked to explain exactly what it means to be a “Marquette lawyer,” and I respond by saying that our alumni offer the answer. A “Marquette lawyer” reflects an ongoing and dedicated commitment both to the legal profession and to the broader community. The matter is perhaps summed up in the phrase one often hears in Jesuit circles, the notion of our seeking to be “men and women for others.”

Dean Robert F. Boden, one of my predecessors whom many of you remember, said it quite well:

There are well-recognized characteristics which distinguish the Marquette lawyer. They can be observed in the offices and courtrooms everywhere the law's work is done by graduates of this law school. These characteristics include solid grounding in the fundamentals of legal analysis and doctrine, an understanding of procedure and the means of accomplishing legal objectives legally, an appreciation for the philosophical and jurisprudential values underlying the law, a strong sense of professional responsibility, and a pervading commitment to the service of fellow human beings in a useful professional context. This is what we mean by the term “Marquette lawyers.”

I might add that it is not even clear to me that one has to be a graduate of Marquette Law School to be a Marquette lawyer. Surely my predecessor, Dean Howard B. Eisenberg, embodied as well as anyone else the principles of which Dean Boden spoke.

But it is the alumni who have established this tradition and who do the overwhelming bulk of the work to maintain it. And so it is appropriate that every so often we should gather and honor particular alumni who are examples of how one can give real meaning to the phrase “Marquette lawyer” by his or her actions. We are grateful for their examples.

SPORTS LAW ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR AWARD

I will start tonight's presentation with the Sports Law Alumnus of the Year Award. This award was created by the Sports Law Alumni Association to recognize someone dedicated to the Sports Law Program at Marquette and to the whole field of sports law. Greg Heller, of the Class of 1996, is such a person.

As a law student, Greg was a member of the Sports Law Society, Articles Editor of the *Marquette Sports Law Journal*, and a research assistant for the National Sports Law Institute. Since law school, Greg has continued to be involved in the sports industry, first with a law firm based in Chicago and later in Atlanta. He is now senior counsel for Turner Broadcasting System. Greg no longer practices sports law as part of a general law practice but rather has become a decision-maker for one of the most influential companies within the sports industry.

Greg, you exemplify the success that students in the Sports Law Program can achieve. For your commitment to Marquette as a student and alumnus, and for the excellence and leadership you exemplify as a Marquette lawyer, it is my privilege to give you this award signifying your selection as the Sports Law Alumnus of the Year.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Our next award is the Lifetime Achievement Award. It is being presented to a former St. Thomas More scholar, a former Associate Editor of the *Marquette Law Review*, and at one point in his life (at age 35) the youngest president of the California Trial Lawyers Association—Wylie Aitken. Wylie himself is scarcely former—he continues routinely to be ranked as one of California's "top 100" influential lawyers—but it is his entire career that we honor.

When he graduated, almost 40 years ago, Wylie left the cold of Wisconsin to set up practice back in sunny California. I understand from those who know him especially well that he is as passionate about the law now as he was all those years ago. (As an aside, some dispositive evidence of Wylie's enthusiasm for the law can perhaps be found in the fact that Wylie's three children—Darren, Christopher, and Ashleigh—are attorneys themselves. Darren and Christopher are both partners at the family firm, and Ashleigh is practicing at another law firm. And they all married attorneys. Ashleigh's husband, Michael, will take the bar exam in July. The bar exam, by way of explanation for the Marquette Law School alums practicing in Wisconsin, is this test that some of us took after law school to demonstrate competence to practice law!)

Over the past several decades in California, Wylie Aitken has become a nationally recognized trial lawyer, with a large number of his cases resulting in precedent-setting decisions. He has been trial counsel in a number of significant tort cases, including bad-faith insurance practices (as a defense lawyer by background I should say *alleged* bad-faith insurance practices), aviation, automobiles, product liability, business tort litigation, and actions involving wrongful death and major personal injuries, including attention-getting cases involving a mountain lion attack, medical negligence, and other matters.

But this is not all. Being a good Marquette lawyer, Wylie often caught the "volunteer bug." He has



Gregory J. Heller, L'96

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Wylie A. Aitken, L'65

held numerous volunteer offices and memberships. He has taught and lectured and is committed to public service. At the same time, he has combined this professional success with time for his family—his wife, Bette, and their three children.

Let us also not forget that Wylie always has been loyal to his alma mater. Wylie has been known to travel to watch the men's basketball team play. He and Bette have hosted Marquette alumni events in California and have endowed a Law School scholarship and are annual Woolsack Society donors.

Wylie, for your commitment to service, excellence, and leadership in being a Marquette lawyer, I would ask that you join me at the podium to accept the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Remarks of Wylie A. Aitken in Accepting the Lifetime Achievement Award

Hopefully with sincere humility—though a great trial lawyer once commented that “humility in a trial lawyer is just another form of hypocrisy”—I recognize that the primary criterion for this award is longevity as reflected in the color of my hair more than my accomplishments. You can't receive a lifetime achievement award without hanging around a long time to the point that your law school is not quite sure what to do with you.

Frankly, I am always somewhat embarrassed for being honored for what I love to do. Since leaving this campus in June of 1965, and returning to California, I have been the proverbial “kid in the candy store,” receiving pay and thanks for “comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable.” And all this at a time when so many lawyers are reported to be unsatisfied with their jobs or disillusioned with the law. I suggest they get a “life”—a “legal life” focused on their clients and the professional responsibilities of being a “Marquette lawyer.”

I am standing here because of the help of a lot of people and to whom I therefore wish to give thanks:

To Mom and Dad, whom we have lost in the last few years—and particularly to Mom, whom we lost this past year—whose sacrifices gave me the resources to eat and sleep.

To my wife Bette, the California girl who moved to Milwaukee with our young son and who transferred to the New York Life office here in Milwaukee. Her earnings allowed us to spend one dollar for three pounds of ground beef, which we converted to hamburgers, meat-loaf, and tacos (at a time when no one in Milwaukee knew what a taco was).

To my children, of whom I am most proud: Darren, Chris, and

Ashleigh, all lawyers and all married to lawyers, except for Ashleigh who is married to a third-year law student. Someone suggested today that we have too many lawyers. We can never have too many good lawyers, lawyers following in the tradition of the “Marquette lawyer.” Nor should we ever stop recruiting them to this great Jesuit university.

And certainly to Marquette University, which made me a St. Thomas More Scholar, a full-tuition scholarship which enabled a young kid of 20 years of age to come here (all I had to do was to figure out how to pay for food and find a place to sleep).

To James Ghiardi who first awakened me to Torts—though my plaintiff's career and battles with the Defense Research Institute may not be what he intended!

To Professor Robert O'Connell, my mentor, my friend, and the person who opened law and life for both my wife and me. He even gave Bette and me our first china set, imitation Indian Tree, which we have to this very day!

To my support group, my classmates, many of whom are here tonight. People like Pete Reiske, Ken Donner, and Jim Ehrle who politely rolled their eyes when I told them in August of 1962 how I had fulfilled a lifelong dream of “going to law school back east”! And to our fallen comrades, particularly Jim Boyd and Gene Hoyer, since as a class we went uptown together and downtown together.

And last but not least to another fallen comrade, Howard Eisenberg, who sought me out in California and reawakened my interest in Marquette and who re-energized my commitment to this school. He was a great and very special person, and the school and the law will miss him dearly. Dean Kearney has, as it has already been said, large shoes to fill, and I know Howard will help him do that.

As to me, thank you, you have been most kind.

LAW ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR AWARD

Our final award tonight is for the Law Alumnus of the Year. For me this year, it has been not merely a privilege, but even a joy, to get to know our Law Alumnus (or Alumna) of the Year. Judy Drinka is a member of our Advisory Board Executive Committee, which meets every month to help me with fundraising.

Judy graduated from law school at a time when women were sometimes still said to be taking spots that should have gone to a man. Despite such obstacles, Judy forged ahead to prove such comments wrong. She has been a highly visible alumna through the years and has been a mentor, not only to women lawyers of Milwaukee but also to many others. She has managed her own law firm, has excelled in the area of estate and trust planning, and has been able to add her skills and abilities to the guidance and growth of the cultural and social needs of Milwaukee. Judy has been active in the Milwaukee Bar Association, a member of the Board of Directors of Alverno College (I understand that many of her Alverno friends are here tonight, including Sister Joel Read), president of the local chapter of the Girl Scouts of America, an officer of the Florentine Opera, and the holder of numerous positions throughout Milwaukee.

Let me quote one of Judy's friends from the Class of 1975, a fellow member of her "law school study group": "Judy is outgoing, has a great sense of humor, and is committed to ideals that are consistent with a Jesuit university. Judy brings honor to Marquette in the way she lives. And with her wide circle of friends, she has many opportunities to do that. Judy is exactly the kind of person Marquette Law School hopes will result when it sends new graduates into the world."

Judy is extremely loyal to Marquette and always lends her support when asked. She is a member of the Woolsack Society, has served on law reunion committees, and, as I have mentioned before, is a member of the Law School Executive Committee.

Judy, you are a shining example of Marquette's mission. For your commitment to service, excellence, and leadership in being a Marquette lawyer, it is my privilege to present to you the Law Alumnus of the Year Award.



Judith Kochis Drinka, L'75

*"Judy brings honor to
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the world."*



Hon. James A. Wynn, Jr., L'79

ALL-UNIVERSITY ALUMNI MERIT AWARD

The Honorable James A. Wynn, Jr., was presented the All-University Alumni Merit Award at a separate ceremony. Judge Wynn serves on the North Carolina Court of Appeals. He has received many honors, including the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers Award in 1995 as the Appellate Judge of the Year and the 1996 MLK Award from the Baptist Convention of North Carolina. He was one of 20 judges and scientists around the nation recently invited to participate in the Einstein Institute's "Working Conversation on Genetics in the Courtroom for the 21st Century" and is chair-elect of the Appellate Judges' Conference of the American Bar Association. Judge Wynn began his career as a lawyer in the U.S. Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps, earning the Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Naval Reserve Medal. He is a captain in the U.S. Naval Reserve. Judge Wynn previously served as an assistant appellate defender for the State of North Carolina, as an associate justice on the North Carolina Supreme Court, and as a private practitioner. Rev. Robert A. Wild, S.J., President of Marquette University, presented Judge Wynn the All-University Alumni Merit Award on April 24, 2004.

The following are excerpts from Judge Wynn's remarks in accepting the award:

Thank you, Father Wild and the Marquette University family, for honoring me with this award tonight. I have been privileged to serve as a judge for 14 years in North Carolina. Judges constantly face the choice of doing that which is right or that which is politically correct or expedient. I have sought to follow my instinct of doing what is right rather than politically correct. It amazes me that the people of North Carolina continue to elect me! But even now I am a candidate for our supreme court because I believe our citizens do not really want political judges—they want judges who are fair and impartial and who will follow the law rather than make the law. They want judges with moral courage. I draw moral strength from my days at Marquette Law School with former Dean Robert Boden, and then from the progressive leadership of Dean Howard Eisenberg, and now with the enormous potential of our new Dean Joseph Kearney. I am also proud to have my classmate, John Rothstein, here tonight to help me celebrate this honor.

Moral courage is particularly meaningful to me this year—the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. As an African-American, I am proud of the men and women who stood up during times when they faced great obstacles. And I am especially proud of the judges that Jack Bass called "Unlikely Heroes," who chose to stand up for the right thing even though they faced social ostracism in their community. They persevered by believing in the greater man. I, too, believe we need to develop greater understandings with people around the world; we need to be more global in our thoughts. We must develop stronger connective global relationships with each other and respect minorities and the underprivileged. It is, after all, how we treat "the least of these" that we are ultimately judged. •



Dean Joseph D. Kearney, Judge James A. Wynn, Jr., and Rev. Robert A. Wild, S.J., at the All-University Alumni Awards.

Law School Reunions 2005

Get out your calendars and palm pilots to make plans to attend your reunion! We want to help you remember those long-ago law school days, rekindle friendships, share memories, and talk about all that's been going on in your life since you left the Marquette campus.

————— *If you graduated in a year that ends in a 0 or a 5,* —————
this is your year to celebrate!

Class of 1955: May 21 and 22, 2005

Classes of '60, '65, '70, '75, '80, '85, '90, '95, and '00: June 3 and 4, 2005.
(Each class will have its own separate reunion dinner during the weekend.)

If you are interested in serving on the reunion committee for your class, please contact Christine Wilczynski-Vogel at (414) 288-3167 or christine.wv@marquette.edu. We are always looking for more help.