Legal Education and Mary Poppins

Shortly after becoming dean in 2003, I began to explore with colleagues how we might further develop our advocacy program with a first-rate intramural moot court competition, with some permanence, at Marquette Law School. My intuition took us only that far, and a faculty committee thereupon did the hard work. In particular, it proposed the creation of our Appellate Writing and Advocacy course, as an upper-level gateway to all moot court experiences (intramural and interscholastic), including our Jenkins Honors Moot Competition.

This past spring marked the 20th anniversary of the first Jenkins Finals, now a premier event at the Law School, and the photo below captures this year's student organizers, finalists, and presiding judges. (Permit us to note that, for the first time, all three "Jenkins jurists" were Marquette Law School alums.) The success of this year's Jenkins Competition owed a good deal to the hard work of both those involved and those who, 20 or more years ago, began it well.

This seems to me rather a theme for this new issue of the *Marquette Lawyer*. Two contributors—Hon. John K. Bush, judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, who spoke at our graduation this past May (pp. 58–59), and Alan Jenkins, professor of practice at Havard Law School, who earlier that week delivered our Boden Lecture (see pp. 22–31)—were invited to speak at the Law School certainly because of their accomplishments and prominence over the decades. Yet they accepted, no doubt, in part because of circumstances that began well: I had met both of them on the first day of law school, in 1986, when the three of us were all new students together and part of the same small orientation group (14 people, if I recall correctly). I don't remember the first time I met Tom Merrill, whose Hallows Lecture provides our cover story, in the hallways of the law firm where I practiced in Chicago in the 1990s, but with him, too, we may presume that things got off to a good start.

Lest the point be stated inadequately, or seem to be just personal, permit me to state it in more memorable terms: *Well begun is half done*. If the phrase sounds vaguely familiar, you may have heard Julie Andrews saying it to her charges, Jane and Michael, in *Mary Poppins*, as she seeks to make a game out of straightening up the nursery. (I tend to picture myself as more like the Mr. Banks character in the movie, but let's leave that aside.) For me, the phrase was unfamiliar until Tom Ganey, who was the university architect and the Law School's indispensable partner in the design and construction of Eckstein Hall, used it on one occasion or another to describe our progress in that 2007–2010 project. Any of you who have ever been in Eckstein Hall, which remains the best law school building in the country more than a decade and a half after its opening, will know that it must have been quite the beginning, indeed. And we are not just talking history: Rather, to this very day, Eckstein Hall helps us in the annual effort to get *our* law students off to a good start, beginning with the well-designed orientation program that launches them as Marquette law students and future Marquette lawyers.

This issue of the magazine, even beyond the personalities mentioned, reflects this same basic theme: specifically, that a good foundation is essential to permanence and to solid further construction. It seems right to put it in such more high-minded terms given that the topics include the U.S. Constitution (Merrill's Hallows Lecture, pp. 8–21) and the Declaration of Independence and where American society stands today (pp. 32–44). We were "well begun" as a polity by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Law schools such as Marquette University's, because of their direct educational work and their role as conveners, are unusually well-positioned to build upon this work, which, we may fervently hope, will never be done. ■

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Dean and Professor of Law



An All-Marquette-Lawyer Jenkins Finals

On March 18, 2026, Marquette Law School marked the twentieth anniversary of its first Jenkins Honors Moot Court Competition, held each spring. Gathered together in Eckstein Hall's Lubar Center for the Jenkins Finals, with a large crowd, were the following (in each caption group proceeding left to right): on the sides of the photo, respectively, **Michael Klein** and **Ananda Deacon**, third-year students (now graduates), members of the Moot Court Executive Board who helped lead in organizing the competition; next in, **Zachary McClenathan** and **Alexander Fountain** (on left) and **Karli Ring** and **Elizabeth TenBarge** (on right), second-year students arguing in the finals in teams of two; and the three individuals in the middle, judging the finals, **Hon. Byron Conway, L'02**, U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, **Hon. Janet Protasiewicz, L'88**, Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, and **Hon. Michael Iasparro, L'01**, U.S. Magistrate Judge for the Northen District of Illinois.