The University of Maryland School of Law hosts the 1998 NAPIL Career Fair and Conference

On Nov. 6 and 7, the University of Maryland School of Law co-sponsored and hosted the 1998 National Association for Public Interest Law (NAPIL) Career Fair and Conference. With 145 student member groups, NAPIL is the nation’s largest organization devoted to training the next generation of public interest lawyers. Each year, students, practitioners and public interest leaders congregate in the nation’s capital area during the NAPIL Annual Career Fair and Conference to continue building a movement for equal justice.

This year’s conference, “Balancing the Scales: A Movement for Equal Justice,” was an overwhelming success with the largest attendance in the history of the event. The weekend’s activities were a celebration of the tremendous growth in NAPIL’s Equal Justice Corps programs, a series of initiatives coordinated by NAPIL and its chapters to create summer and post-graduate public interest jobs.

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg spoke at the NAPIL Awards Dinner on Friday night. Dean Donald Gifford was recognized for his support of the Career Fair and Conference. In addition, the University of Maryland School of Law was proud to congratulate 1998 graduate Deborah Fleischaker, a 1998 NAPIL Partner Fellow.

Elaine Jones, President of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, was the keynote speaker at the conference on Saturday. Jones was the first African-American female to graduate from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1967. In 1972, she was counsel of record in Furman v. Georgia, the landmark case in which the U.S. Supreme Court struck down death penalty statutes in 37 states.

In addition, Professor Brenda Blom; Teresa Schmiedeler, Director of Career Development; and third-year law students Leslie Brauer and Lila Shapiro were panelists at the conference.

Congratulations to NAPIL for its continued commitment to public interest law.

The University of Maryland School of Law would like to acknowledge the following for their sponsorship of the 1998 NAPIL Career Fair and Conference:

Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll
Piper & Marbury
Gallagher, Evelius & Jones
Saul, Ewing, Weinberg & Green
Miles & Stockbridge
Whiteford, Taylor & Preston
Ober, Kaler, Grimes & Shriver
Lexis-Nexis


Professor Hundah Chiu has been appointed Ambassador-at-Large of the Republic of China for the period of October 1998 to October 1999.

Douglas L. Colbert presented “Right to Counsel at Bail Resolution,” ABA House of Delegates and Criminal Justice Council, ABA Annual Meeting, Toronto, Ontario, August 1998. He is the Chair of the Maryland State Bar Association Section on Correctional Reform, as well as Co-Chair of the American Bar Association Criminal Justice Section on Law Student Recruitment.


Susan Denise presented “Research and Writing in Law Practice: Making the Transition from Law School,” Miles & Stockbridge Summer Associate Program, Baltimore, June 3, 1998.

Deborah Hellman was appointed to the Ethical, Legal and Social Issues Subcommittee of the Human Genome Initial Review Group at the NIH.


1998 Maryland Law School Club Event

On Oct. 20, 1998, the University of Maryland School of Law hosted its annual Maryland Law School Club event at the new Ravens Stadium. This event recognizes the generosity of donors who give more than $1,000 to the Law School Fund. The keynote speaker for the evening was Art Modell, President of the Baltimore Ravens and the person responsible for bringing the NFL back to Baltimore. He purchased the Cleveland Browns in March 1961 for an unheard of $4 million. In his 35 years of Browns' ownership, his team played 20 playoff games, including winning the NFL Championship in 1964.
Robert B. Watts ’49 leaves a legacy to remember

By Patricia Young

He is a man remembered for his compassion. He is a man remembered for his insight into the human condition; a man remembered for his sense of humor. Key ingredients for a successful human rights activist in the turbulent civil unrest of the 1960s.

He was a man who fought for the truth.


At the age of 76, Judge Watts was actively contributing to the legal causes and values he held his entire life. He was Master for the Circuit Court of Baltimore City, hearing 100 uncontested divorce cases per month in his office and an additional 10 to 15 pro bono at the courthouse, through the Legal Aid Bureau; he arbitrated several matters a month; he spoke to civil rights and legal aid groups; and held the position Of Counsel to Piper and Marbury, one of the city’s most prestigious law firms.

“Bob was part of the very important glue that holds a professional organization together,” says Frank Burch ’74, Chairman of Piper and Marbury, who had worked with Watts for 12 years.

“He was courageous, accomplished and a bridge builder. A rare combination. What enabled him to build bridges even with those with whom he disagreed was an infectious sense of humor,” Burch continues.

Professor Larry Gibson, of the University of Maryland School of Law, agrees. Gibson comments that the phrase, “Blessed are the peace makers” applies to Judge Watts. “He was a bridge builder who sought to bring people together and make them understand they had more in common than what divided them.”

Certainly the hallmark of his career was fighting for justice for everyone: black or white, rich or poor. As a young lawyer for the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Judge Watts defended those arrested in demonstrations that desegregated Northwood Theater, four major downtown department stores, downtown restaurants and Gwyn Oak Amusement Park in the 1960s.

In an interview in 1997, Judge Watts fought back tears as he reminisced about the energy possessed by the Morgan State, Johns Hopkins and Goucher College students in picketing for their rights to enter these establishments:

“Here we had these students who were willing to walk in dignity...To see blacks and whites walking together for a cause—that is my highlight from the civil rights movement.”

“He was always the optimist, never harbored resentment—a hard thing to do when faced with what he accomplished,” Burch comments on Watts’ success in the fight for civil rights.

Born in West Baltimore in 1922, Judge Watts graduated with honors from Morgan State College in 1943 and then served in the Army until 1945. He earned a law degree from the School of Law in 1949 and later in the same year he and others founded the firm of Brown, Allen and Watts.

He worked in Baltimore with Thurgood Marshall, former Supreme Court Justice and Chief Counsel for the NAACP, on civil rights cases before being appointed substitute police court Magistrate in 1953 and assistant police court Magistrate in 1956.

Judge Watts was named a Judge of the city’s Traffic Court in 1957, replacing E. Everett Lane, the first black to preside over a Maryland court of record. Judge Watts was the first black appointed to the Municipal Court when it was formed in 1960. He was defeated in 1962, when his name appeared last in an alphabetical listing on the ballot, but was reappointed by Gov. J. Millard Tawes in 1963. He won a full 10-year term in 1966.

In 1968, he was appointed by Gov. Spiro T. Agnew to the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City, the predecessor of the Circuit Court. He served on the court until 1985, when he retired at age 68 to join the law firm of Russell and Thompson, founded by George L. Russell Jr. ’54, a friend of 50 years.

“Bob was an open and forthright man who was not afraid of the truth however it portrayed itself,” Russell states. “Bob understood that forgiveness was the key to getting along in the world and that forgiveness did not always mean forgetting, but that it always means remembering without malice.”

Judge Watts was recognized for his endeavors as he was showered with numerous awards, honorary degrees and appointments throughout his career. Placing a strong emphasis on pro bono work, the School of Law presented the Benjamin L. Cardin Pro Bono Service Award to Watts in 1997.

Judge Harry Cole ’49, a classmate with Judge Watts, reflects on his relationship with Watts. “We had a long history. We were boyhood friends, we attended Morgan State and the University of Maryland together. We worked together; I nominated him for traffic Judge when I was in the senate. He was a great man. A great friend.”

Judge Watts is survived by his wife, Jacquelyn Johnson, whom he married in 1944; two sons; three daughters; and two grandchildren.
Jeanette R. Wolman '24

The University of Maryland School of Law and the Baltimore legal community lost a trailblazer and advocate for women in January 1999. Jeanette R. Wolman '24 had practiced law for 70 years before her death at age 96.

When Wolman applied to the Columbia University Law School in New York City, she received a simple response: "Columbia does not admit women to its law school," the Dean wrote. Undaunted, Wolman enrolled at the University of Maryland School of Law in 1921, one of three women in her class. After graduating in 1924 and passing the bar, she became one of the few women practicing law in Baltimore. Because the Baltimore City Bar Association did not accept women, she and six other female lawyers established the Women's Bar Association in 1927. In 1991, Wolman was honored by the American Bar Association with the Margaret Brent Award presented by Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Her son, Benjamin Wolman, remembers a story his mother once told him, "A woman told her that it was so nice that she had devoted her life to women's liberation and she answered, 'Oh no, I believe in women's rights... but no one, not just women, should be held back because of artificial boundaries or limitations.'"

Past and future graduates of the University of Maryland School of Law owe Wolman a great deal for her commitment to women's rights. She will continue to be an inspiration to all who fight for social justice.

As this issue of JD went to press, the law school was saddened to hear of the death of Judge Harry Cole '49. The next issue of JD will include remarks and an obituary.