

Yale Honorands Remarks

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I was instructed, as representative of the honorands, to deliver a few paragraphs (no more than three) full of warmth and humor. Easier said than done. My twenty-two year stint as a judge has honed my ability to make other people stop talking, but not necessarily to curb myself. But I will try.

First the warmth. Yale is the premier university; I say that unashamedly although I have a husband and a son who graduated from Harvard and two daughters who now work there (one, fortunately, like me, a Yale law graduate). Fifty years ago, Yale gave me a *laissez passer* into the big chilly world at a time when women needed heavy credentials to move around out there; more importantly, it taught me reverence for the enduring principles of fairness, equity, and the need for rules to govern their application, instilled in me a healthy irreverence toward the way in which those principles are enforced or not enforced in the so-called “real world,” and bred in me a passion for justice and discipline in attacking injustice. It gave me a succession of versatile, brilliant,

talented, and tolerant (of me) law clerks of every color, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. It made me proud when it stood tall against the waves of bigotry, mindless conformity, meanness and isolationism that has washed over our nation intermittently in the past five decades.

Yale personifies the ying and yang principle of opposites synthesizing to produce the nation's leading conservative thinkers and the nation's leading liberal thinkers—from Presidents on down. It nurtured international humanitarian law (a body of law we at the Hague War Crimes Tribunal are now seeking to apply to the strife-ridden Balkans), the new age of environmentalism, and the slow, deliberate advance of civil rights for all. It has consistently honored quality above ideology, as it does today with this distinguished company of honorands.

As for the humorous contents of these remarks, I'll say simply that at age 70, it gets steadily harder to be funny on cue. I could reminisce about the dilapidated Charles Adams mansion at the far end of Hillhouse Avenue, long since a victim of the wrecker's ball, where the dozen or so women law students in my class were herded together so as not to tantalize the young Princes on campus, or about the freight train that rattled past my window every midnight for three years evoking visions of far-away travel as it deposited a soft cloud of soot over my room. But I'll spare you. Today, I'm grateful, thrilled, and humbled, as I know are my fellow honorands. I've always felt it was reward enough to be out there where things were happening and to try to make the way they happen more fulfilling for everyone. It's a simple but elusive goal and to be honored by Yale for pursuing, though not always attaining it, is quite wonderful.