

THE FOUR LIVES OF

GEORGE R. CURRIE

It's no wonder that many able people desiring flexible, influential, varied and interesting careers have turned to the Law. There are some remarkable models for them to observe.

For example, there's George R. Currie—lawyer in general practice, Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice, Professor, dahlia grower of great renown, arbitrator, trial judge, all around citizen. All in one lifetime, too.

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Since his retirement in June, 1970 from his position as professor of Law, he has had at least three concurrent careers. He started out as a Reserve Judge, sitting in various circuits, chiefly in Dane County, where the presiding judge had a congested calendar or was unable to sit. In 1971, he was appointed by the federal Office of Economic Opportunity to participate in an evaluation of the California Rural Legal Assistance Program. Governor Ronald Reagan had vetoed the program's appropriations after an investigation by his staff. Judge Currie sat with former Chief Justice Williamson of Maine, and Justice Robert Lee, a member of the Supreme Court of Colorado. The opinion of the three commissioners was directed to the Director of OEO. The study took about four weeks and produced the decision that the charges leveled by the Governor's investigators were unfounded. On the contrary, the Agency was lauded by the visiting judges.

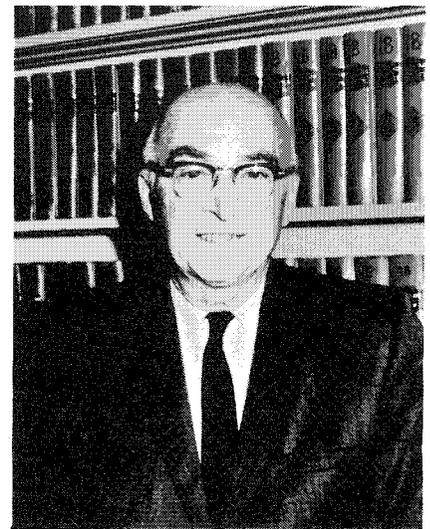
During 1973, Judge Currie devoted 91 full days to his judicial work as a reserve judge and expects his total for 1974 to at least equal that of 1973. This work is often spread part-time over many days, as he attempts to confine his decision writing to mornings. His judicial specialty is the review of the decisions of many state agencies: the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations (formerly the Industrial Commission), the Public Service Commission, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Bureau of Personnel, Wisconsin Tax Appeals Commission and others. Appeals from agency rulings are heard in the Circuit Court of Dane County, where he is situated.

For eight months in 1972 and early 1973, he served as Chairman of the Governor's Commission on Real Estate Transactions, an examination of the state's procedure in the acquisition, sale and leasing of property. It was the University's acquisition of Lowell Hall, widely reported in the papers, that probably led to the investigation. The Commission found no dishonesty, but did recommend changes in the procedures used.

Mr. Currie serves as the permanent arbitrator between the Firefighters Union and the City of Madison, dealing with grievances which arise under the negotiated agreement. On a case by case basis, he is appointed by the state Department of Administration and the Wisconsin State Employers Union as arbitrator of disputes under the negotiated agreement between the State and the Union. Grievances have to do with claims for overtime pay, letters of reprimand, injuries by inmates in the state institutions, etc. In 1974 he has heard six of these arbitration cases and two additional ones have been scheduled for later in November.

All of these occupations have developed since 1970, the year in which Professor Currie retired. He had been a Faculty member only two and a half years. He taught large classes in Corporations, Evidence and Civil Procedure II, and also seminars on appellate practice. Even as a professor, his talents of judgment were put to work. He served as Chairman of the Mayor's Commission on the Mifflin Street disorders, with the charge of determining the facts of the 3 days turmoil, and recommending police procedures to deal with similar situations in the future. He was the first Chairman of the Legal Education Opportunities Committee. He worked, he recalls, three or four hours to prepare for each class hour, but always found it enjoyable.

He came to the Faculty after 16 years and 4 months on the Supreme Court of Wisconsin. Appointed in 1951, by Governor Walter Kohler, Jr., his Sheboygan friend, he was elected to the Court in 1957 without opposition for the term expiring January 1, 1968, and defeated for re-election in 1967. He was made Chief Justice in 1964. He has fond memories of his days as a Justice, though the work was hard. During the first nine years of his tenure, there were no law clerks. The law clerks, he recalls, permitted a greater depth of research and a sounder basis for judgment.



George Currie

FACING THE FUTURE

All of this began, of course, with graduation from the Law School in 1925, where he was one of the early editors-in-chief of the *Law Review*, a member of Coif, the 1970 recipient of the Law Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni award. Shortly before graduation he borrowed a Model T Ford and went looking for work. His future awaited him in Sheboygan, where he became associated with Bowler and Bowler, later being made a partner in the firm. After Mr. E. R. Bowler died in 1937, Mr. Currie formed a partnership with Fulton H. Leberman, also a graduate of the Law School, which partnership continued until the latter's death in 1941. Thereafter, he joined the partnership of which he was a member when appointed to the court, the firm name then being Buchen, Currie, Federer, Grote and Hesslink. The senior partner, Gustav Buchen, was a long-time state Senator, the father of Philip Buchen, President Ford's partner in Grand Rapids and confidant in the White House.

It was a large and diverse practice, and much of his time was devoted to labor relations, on the management side. Although he developed deep roots in Sheboygan and an active involvement in many community affairs, he did not mind moving to Madison, as the future looked bright and the prospects good.

The future is still bright for George Currie.

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The people of the United States—and of much of the rest of the world, too—are examining with care the vital signs of the economy, eager to find some indication of the future.

One of the signs is the job market for the young professionals. And, as with other economic indicators, reading it is so difficult that even the experts have trouble making predictions.

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The Class of 1974 included 44 graduates at mid-year (December, 1973), 254 graduates in May and 20 graduates in August. Of these 42 are women. Although, according to Mary Staley, the number of positions available appeared to be about the same as in other recent years, the increase in the number of graduates has tightened the job market, and created keen competition for the jobs.

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As the *Gargoyle* goes to press, about 73 of the 318 graduates (about 28%) have not yet notified the Placement Office whether and where they have located employment.

Of the 270 graduates about whom there is recent information, 143 (about 53%) have accepted positions in private practice, 108 located in Wisconsin and 34 outside the state. Of these 19 are establishing themselves as sole practitioners or partners of other recent graduates. Fifty students have government positions, 17 in the federal service, 28 in state and local government, some of them as assistant district attorneys and assistant city attorneys. Seventeen recent graduates have joined agencies which have become known as

No one knows, for example, how many jobs are presently available. Keeping track of the mobile young people is very difficult, many of them do not keep in touch with the Law School after they leave. Some recent graduates may not be looking for positions immediately; some limit their searches to certain limited areas of the law; others may be awaiting bar admission in other states; some are awaiting placement in certain communities. Some may just forget to let the Law School Placement Office know where they are.

Legal Services—8 in Wisconsin and 9 outside the state. Thirty-two members of the class have accepted positions in businesses, including banks and insurance companies among others. Twenty-three of these are in Wisconsin. Six recent graduates are serving this year as clerks to federal and state Supreme Court judges. Eight graduates are serving their deferred active duty in the military.

All of these placements, including those who have non-law employment (13 have reported) are similar to the graduates of 1973 and 1972.

The percentage of graduates who have stayed in Wisconsin, in various occupations, is more than 60%, about the same as 1973 and 1972. This may be, at least partially, the result of the Law School's marked reduction in the number of non-residents admitted to the Law School. Probably, the privilege of Bar admission (without examination) on the motion of the Dean was a decisive factor for some graduates.