

# 1994 Distinguished Service Award

## Philip S. Habermann ('47)

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BY WLAA PRESIDENT  
JOHN SKILTON

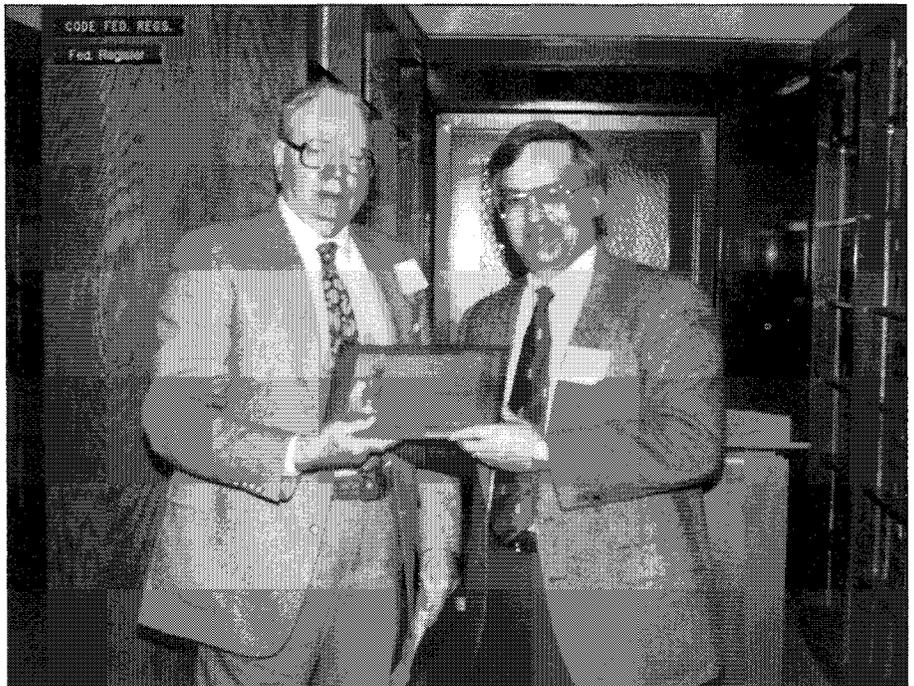
The Distinguished Service Award is the highest honor presented by the University of Wisconsin Law School. Since its inception in 1967 there have been 50 winners. The Award recognizes an "outstanding contribution to the profession" by an alumnus or faculty member of the School.

For 1994, the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Law Alumni Association has chosen to present one of these awards to Philip S. Habermann, Class of 1947.

For 25 years, the name Phil Habermann was synonymous with the State Bar of Wisconsin. When lawyers around the state encountered a problem with their practice or with the law itself, they were likely to think, "I need to call Phil!"

From a one-person operation in small, rented quarters to a building owned free and clear by the Bar; from one file cabinet and an old typewriter to an efficient staff doing a variety of work relating to lawyers, courts and the administration of justice; from a few thousand lawyers belonging to a voluntary organization to more than 9,800 diverse members of the mandatory bar; Phil was there organizing, negotiating, conducting public relations programs, lobbying for the efficient administration of justice, traveling to every county seat in Wisconsin, innovating solutions to the fair provision of legal services, and creating friendships across the state and around the country.

Born in Lodi, Wisconsin, in 1913, Phil began his career in association manage-



*WLAA President John Skilton presents the 1994 WLAA Distinguished Service Award to Philip S. Habermann ('47) in recognition of his work on behalf of Wisconsin lawyers.*

ment even before earning his undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 1935 he became Assistant Secretary of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. Shortly after receiving his Ph.B. in 1941, Phil left the state briefly to run the Maine Municipal Association before entering the U.S. Navy as a supply officer in 1943. After World War II, Phil returned to the campus as a law student, earning his LL.B. in 1947.

As a new lawyer in 1947, Phil was chosen as the first director of the new Wis-

consin Legislative Council, where he worked with Warren Knowles and Gordon Bubolz to organize and get the Council running. In 1948, he was chosen to be the first full-time executive of the Wisconsin Bar Association and was given free rein to organize and activate the Association. In 1956, when the Supreme Court ordered the creation of the mandatory bar, Phil became the first Executive Director of the State Bar of Wisconsin, a position he held until he retired late in 1974.

As Executive Director, Phil gained

# Response to Distinguished Service Award

PHIL HARTMANN

Years ago our much beloved Justice Grover Broadfoot was a very popular speaker at bar functions. Grover had two set speeches, a short one and a long one. The short one went, "Thank you." The long one went, "Thank you very much." You can understand why he was so popular!

I'll borrow from Justice Broadfoot and say, "Thank you very much!" This award is a great honor and I am deeply appreciative to the Association for bestowing it. The nicest honors of all are those that are so totally unexpected. I am very much flattered and this night is one of the high points of my career.

Now I should do a "Broadfoot" and sit down, but those in charge of the arrangements here insisted that I say a few more words.

I am especially gratified to see here tonight so many friends from the years when I was director of the State Bar. In fact, one of the lawyers primarily responsible for hiring me back in 1948 is here tonight—Cal Callahan of Columbus, who has been a steadfast friend and mentor for me for many years.

John Skilton was most generous in his remarks about my service with the bar. From a very humble beginning in December 1948, starting with only a file cabinet, a typewriter and \$27,000 in the bank, there was a lot of room for innovation. The first things we bought besides some modest furniture were a good mimeograph and an IBM electric typewriter. Our membership was 2,000, plus about 250 life members who paid no dues. The mandate to me was to get things moving. It was a sheer delight to see the enthusiasm and cooperation that arose from the membership. Things were going very well.

After about four years on the job, I was offered the position heading the League of Municipalities, where I had worked for nine years. The job paid

more than the bar, but I chose to stay where I was. When I gave my declination to the League's search committee, the chairman, Phil Owens of Portage, an old friend, said to me: "Phil, you made the right decision. With the League, you would have 5,000 municipal officials pounding you on the back to get something done. With the Bar, you are pounding 5,000 lawyers on the back to get them to do something!" I never regretted my choice.

John mentioned some of the successes of the bar. My one claim to fame is that when I conceived the Judicare program in 1966, I coined a new name. The Pooh Bahs at Columbia University, who accredit new words for the dictionary, have officially accepted Judicare as a new word, and have given me full credit for it.

The most significant thing that happened during my tenure was, of course, the integration of the bar. I was deeply involved in all that preceded integration and in the transition to an all-inclusive, mandatory bar. It gave me great satisfaction to see what resulted.

It was extremely gratifying to be able to play a large part in upgrading Continuing Legal Education. The earliest start was the Annual Tax School, which for years was the stellar attraction. Actually, we had as many as 1,000 persons at some of these December institutes, where they received a sizable handbook for the total registration fee of three dollars.

How times have changed!

After some years of intensive regional meeting programs and extensive section programs at our two annual meetings, in 1969 the State Bar launched ATS (Advanced Training Seminars) and CLE grew like wildfire. By giving lawyers what they wanted, on a timely basis, and taking it statewide, the program started quickly to become the huge operation it is today.

There are three other unmentioned programs that I am proud of which made

millions of dollars for the lawyers of Wisconsin.

First, at the request of the Brown County Bar in 1951, I drafted and lobbied through the legislature an increase in the fees allowable in Workers Compensation cases. Since the program's inception, the fees had been limited to 10%, but not to exceed \$100. In the most difficult lobbying fight I ever participated in, and with the unflagging support of the local bar associations, we got the limit raised to 20% of the award, where it remains today after more than 40 years.

Secondly, I liked the idea I saw in Ohio, where lawyers were granted lifetime notary public commissions. I copied the Ohio law, had it introduced, and it sailed through our legislature. Since then, lawyers can get a lifetime notary commission, and no longer have to pay an annual fee and buy a bond. The savings have been immense.

Third, and probably most important, in 1961 I induced President Herb Terwilliger and the Board to allow me to compile and publish a Fee Schedule Handbook, and send it to every lawyer and judge in the state. Within months this became the standard of minimum charges throughout the state, lifting lawyer income very significantly. More importantly, it led to accurate timekeeping and billing on an hourly basis, instead of charging fixed and usually inadequate fees. The whole system of fees and charges changed within the next decade, and the net income of lawyers finally achieved a long-overdue substantial increase.

Enough of all this. I sense John beginning to squirm in his chair. He just might be getting ready to cut his allegorical Grandfather Pine down to a stump! This is not the time for reminiscing, so I shall really do a Broadfoot and say again, "Thank you," thank you very much for this great honor and for having me and my daughter here with you tonight.

recognition throughout the country as an expert on association management. After his retirement, he was called upon by the American Bar Association to conduct 72 intensive management surveys and local bar associations, where for six years his insightful comments and recommendations helped reorganize and revitalize weak organizations.

Phil was also innovative during his years with the State Bar. He is credited with the creation of the Judicare plan for providing legal assistance to low-income clients in rural areas. For his work in the area Phil received the Reginald Heber Smith Award in 1964. Phil also took the Bar "on the road" in the early years, traveling the state with his "Regional Meeting" series. Building on the success of the Annual Tax School and the Negligence Law Section Programs, Phil originated the concept of continuing legal education for Wisconsin lawyers. Under his guidance the Bar organized Advanced Training Seminars in 1969. Several years later, Wis-

consin became one of the first states to make continuing legal education a requirement for all lawyers. He served with distinction on a number of ABA committees and commissions relating to the economics of the bar and public relations.

In 1984, the State Bar commissioned Phil to prepare an exhaustive history of the organized bar in Wisconsin. In 1983-84 he served as a part-time consultant to the Legal Services Corporations, working to build better liaison with local bar associations and to develop a voucher system for delivering legal assistance to the needy.

In 1986, Phil was called upon to head the staffing of the commission of the Bicentennial of the Constitution, where he organized the statewide programs of rededication of courthouses and spearheaded the move to bring the Magna Carta to Wisconsin.

A prolific author, Phil not only wrote for and edited the Wisconsin Bar Bulletin but also wrote for a wide variety of legal

publications. He continues to write now during his retirement as any reader of the letters to the editor section of our Madison newspapers will know.

For over forty years, Phil Habermann has been a friend, advisor and confidant of the giants of the legal profession in Wisconsin. While he has chosen to remain primarily offstage, his contribution to the success of the organized bar is clearly recognized by those who pay attention. In 1977, Phil presented this Distinguished Service Award to Warren Resh, a legendary figure in the Wisconsin Department of Justice. Phil told the audience about how, in the great timber-cutting era, prudent loggers would leave a "Grandfather Pine" in an otherwise clear-cut area, a tree with strong genes that could reseed the area. In the legal forest, Phil Habermann is clearly another of those Grandfather Pines, his influence on the profession will be felt long after our generation of lawyers has left the field.