

*“As Time Goes By -  
 One Epic Shining Moment”  
 by Dale Carlson*

By any measure, Judge Conner lived a full and most-productive life. Born before the birth of our Association, he grew up as our fledgling Association’s reputation grew.

We may wonder what was it about the man that catalyzed his productivity over such a long haul. His intellectual curiosity comes fore-most to mind. He loved to learn and to teach what he’d learned, and he never stopped learning and teaching.

His actions made clear that what he loved most, apart from his beloved wife Jan and his immediate family, was patent law. Our Association and its members became his extended family. Time and time again he went out of his way to speak before our Association, always sharp-witted, and with a polite graciousness and a dead-pan sense of humor.

Most recently, he spoke at our May 20, 2009 Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner on the occasion of his handing out awards to the winners of the NYIPLA’s law student writing competition named in his honor. Over the years, his words of praise to the students have doubtless inspired them to go on to get great jobs. One recent two-time winner of the writing competition, Matthew Dowd, went on to clerk for Chief Judge Michel of the Federal Circuit. Upon gaining this opportunity, Matthew observed: “I definitely have Judge Conner and the NYIPLA to thank.”



Several times Judge Conner gave inspirational speeches before our Association’s larger

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gatherings. One stand-out was his speech at the NYIPLA Waldorf Dinner in Honor of the Federal Judiciary in 1997 on the occasion of our Association’s 75th anniversary celebration. His speech became well-known nationally, largely because it was published in the Federal Circuit Bar Journal (Volume 6, Number 4, Winter 1996). Judge Conner (NYIPLA Pres. ‘72-73) shared the podium that evening with the Federal Circuit’s Giles S. Rich (NYIPLA Pres. ‘50-’51).

Perhaps less well-known is his speech at the NYIPLA Waldorf Dinner from two decades earlier, shortly after being elevated to the Bench. It was entitled: “Can a Patent Attorney Find Happiness on the Federal Bench?”. Although we all now know the short answer to be “Yes”, the long answer (which boils down to “Yes-and-then-some”) makes for an interesting read. It can be found on the William C. Conner Inn of Court website at : [www.connerinn.org](http://www.connerinn.org) by clicking on “Inaugural Dinner Journal”.

David Kane’s “personal recollections” appearing in the special tribute section of this Bulletin tells a hair-raising tale about Judge Conner’s plane trip over the Solomon Islands during World War II. Although that story has several variations, depending upon when and to whom the story was told, all variations lead to the same inevitable conclusion, namely that we’re very lucky to have had Judge Conner amongst us in the first instance, much less for the extended time that we did.

We may wonder who will succeed Judge Conner as our Association’s ambassador to the world in all things patent. The short answer is, of course, “no one human being could”. The long answer is one that will doubtless make for an interesting read “down-the-road”.