

"As Time Goes By - On the Shoulders of Giants" *by Dale Carlson*

In 1130 A.D., Bernard of Chartres is reputed to have said: "We are like dwarfs standing [or sitting] upon the shoulders of giants, and so [are] able to see more and farther than the ancients."

In 2009 A.D., our Association marked the passing of three IP giants - Lorimer P. Brooks [NYIPLA Pres. '75-'76], William C. Conner [NYIPLA Pres. '72-'73], and Albert Robin [NYIPLA Pres. '81-'82]. Each made significant contributions to the advancement of our Association and its objectives before, during, and after their time as NYIPLA President.

In their early years, Larry Brooks and Bill Conner shared a common interest in the science of radar. Bill served as a radar officer on an aircraft carrier during World War II. Larry was employed by the U.S. Army Signal Corps to help develop a radar target identification system that was utilized by the Allied Forces during World War II. That system formed the basis for the one used by the FAA to this day to identify airplane traffic.

Whereas Larry and Bill focused on patent law during their time in practice, Al's specialty was trademark law. In addition to the NYIPLA, Al was active in senior positions in INTA and its predecessor organization, the U.S. Trademark Association.

Larry, Bill and Al each left a legacy of mentoring oth-

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ers within our Association. One mentee, Howard Barnaby [NYIPLA Pres. '98-'99], provides an appreciation of Al elsewhere in this issue of the Bulletin.

In his later years, Judge Conner went out of his way to encourage our Association to do what it might to promote experienced patent practitioners as candidates for the federal bench. Such encouragement mirrored that provided by Judge Giles S. Rich [NYIPLA Pres. '50-'51] in a 1997 speech before our Association.

Judge Rich put it thusly: "I have a suggestion for something this association should start thinking about. Although I have no plans for retiring, or taking senior status, or indulging in assisted suicide, any one of which would create a vacancy on my court [the Federal Circuit], nobody lives forever and finding a suitable nominee takes time - not to mention working up support. It would please me to know you were putting your best efforts behind finding me a successor."

Two years later, Judge Rich passed away at age 95, putting him in the record books as the longest-lived active federal judge in the history of our nation

Judge Rich's and Judge Conner's ideas regarding succession planning have new meaning in light of Chief Judge Paul R. Michel's recent announcement that he will retire from the Federal Circuit in May 2010.

Perched squarely on the shoulders of giants of our Association, our members can provide a clear vision from a unique vantage-point for next generation candidates to serve on the federal bench, including those qualified to fill the upcoming vacancy on the Federal Circuit. Doubtless that's what Judges Rich and Conner envisioned. Thankfully, we can too.