

Mary Curtin Speaks to Crowd at Reception

9/19/05--Is it possible to be a happy lawyer? Yes indeed, Mary Daly Curtin assured students and faculty gathered for the Curtin Center for Public Interest Law reception held at Barat House September 8.

Speaking in place of her husband, John “Jack” Curtin Jr.’57, who was unable to attend owing to illness, Mary Curtin recalled her aunt, Mary Daly, who worked as a lawyer in Brighton, Mass., for sixty years. “She was always doing, always giving, and she loved it,” said Curtin, describing how her aunt’s brand of community lawyering included finding homes for needy people and “keeping kids out of trouble.”

Thanks to John Curtin’s leadership, said Carl Solomont ’90, a fellow partner at Bingham McCutchen LLP, the firm has a pro bono program that is regarded as a model for large law firms nationwide. American Lawyer magazine recently honored Curtin with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his commitment to public service.

With contributions from colleagues Carol Head ’01, Sean Riley, private investigator Joe Thornton, and senior paralegal Mary Christiansen, Solomont outlined the firm’s work on behalf of Walter Ograd, currently on death row for the murder of a four-year-old girl in Philadelphia in 1988. Ograd was convicted in 1996, on the basis of a confession allegedly made under duress, and the evidence of a notorious jailhouse informant. At the request of the American Bar Association, the team from Bingham McCutchen agreed to represent Ograd in the post-conviction process, with the aim of securing a new trial.

Tracing records can be tedious, said Christiansen, but knowing that the legwork is a matter of life and death is energizing and fulfilling, and potential sources often bend over backwards to find information. “Very different from my usual work on product liability,” she observed, to laughter.

That energy, that commitment, is what Mary Daly Curtin had in mind when she told the students: “Doing public service is going to make you happy, because you’re changing the world.”

—*Story by Jane Whitehead, BC Law Magazine correspondent*

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