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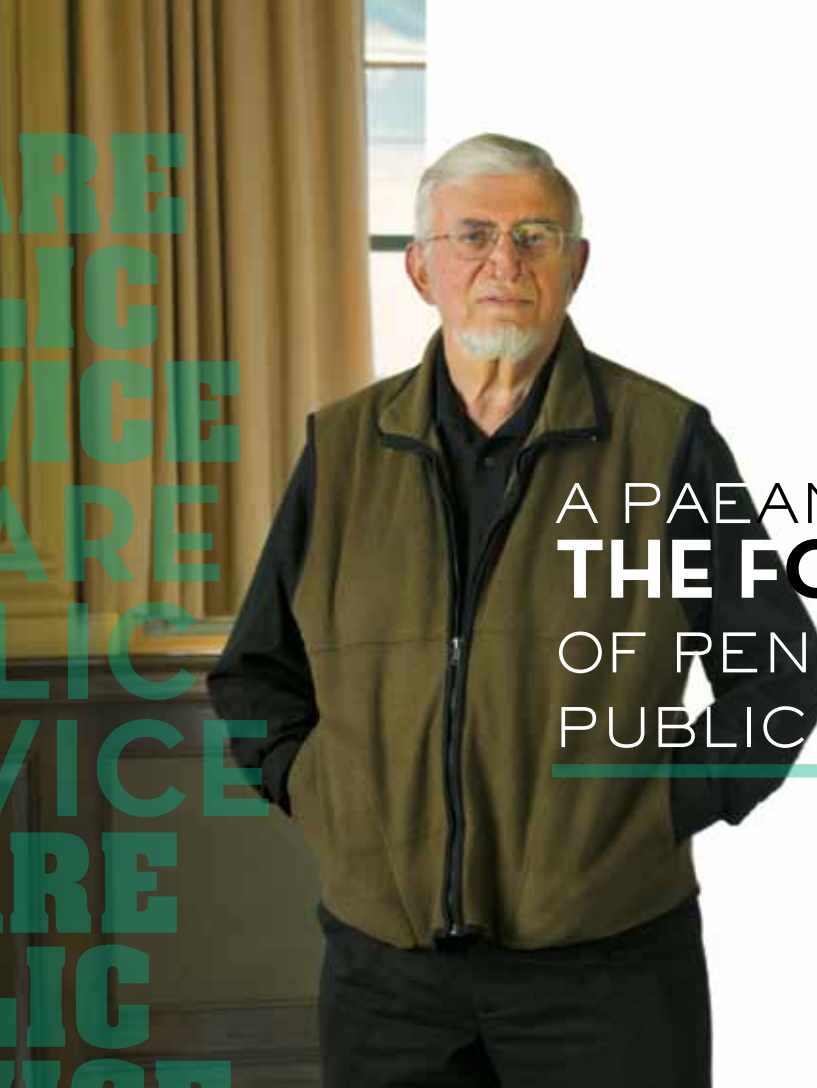
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“Our hope is that the next generation of lawyers will, more likely than those who have gone before, take it for granted that part of the opportunity of being a lawyer is the opportunity to spend part of one’s time doing unpaid service to others.” – Professor Howard Lesnick

Since 1989, when the faculty approved Lesnick’s vision for the Public Service Program, students have taken his words to heart, running with the pro bono graduation requirement and performing more than 500,000 hours of service.

On this 25TH anniversary of the program, which is recognized as a national model, we celebrate the valuable work of the 27 student-run pro bono groups; we pay tribute to the leaders who created a service ethos at the Law School that places us in the forefront of legal education; and we imagine all of the careers for the public good we will generate in the years ahead.



A PAEAN TO **THE FOUNDER** OF PENN LAW'S PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAM

BY DAVID RICHMAN L'69

BELIEVE ME when I say that it was humbling to

receive the first Howard Lesnick Award for public service. At the time, I likened it to receiving the “Michael Jordan Award” for basketball accomplishment: you’re honored by the association, but can’t help but feel unworthy by comparison. And so I did. (The subsequent recipients of the award — a genuinely distinguished lot, including newly minted federal judge Jerry McHugh L’79 and Larry Fox C’65, L’68 who began collecting merit badges when we were cub scout pack-mates, as he professes to recall — have only deepened my feelings of unworthiness.) In retrospect, my reference to Michael Jordan fell short of the mark. A truer, if obscurer comparison, would have been to James Naismith, who hung a peach basket from the balcony of a YMCA gym and originated the game of basketball. For if Howard Lesnick did not invent the concept of the law school public service program, his peach basket was quite refined for the time and has generated a movement in legal education that is played year-round, indoors and out (though mostly in).

The Public Service Program is, today, one of the Law School’s glories, and Howard Lesnick was the inspiration and force behind its creation. When he expounded on the concept in 1994, he said that he came to it as a teacher of professional respon-

sibility. He started, he said, from “the premise that the professional ideal is that a lawyer should devote some significant part of his or her practice to unpaid public service.” When he looked around him at the actual practice of law, he was distressed by the wide gap between the rhetorical commitment to the professional ideal and the reality. Mandatory pro bono service was the vehicle he chose for teaching students “what it means to be a responsible lawyer.” Model Rule of Professional Responsibility 6.1 may cast pro bono service in merely aspirational terms — something lawyers “should” do — but for Howard, aspiration and obligation have no light between them. That’s one way of identifying a moralist, which defines Howard’s ethical stance.

Howard has noted that it is personally fulfilling for a lawyer “to stand with those in trouble.” I can vouch for that and for the many other rewards of pro bono service. And yet, in the end, the personal satisfactions are beside the point. Countless alumni of the Public Service Program, having been imbued with the Lesnick ideal of professional responsibility, have interrupted their remunerative activities to stand with men and women in trouble and without the means to hire a lawyer. That is a fabulous legacy for a law professor, even more so, I daresay, than an award bearing one’s name. Dr. Naismith’s game flourishes and so, to his immense credit, does professor Lesnick’s.

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