

LAW SCHOOL WELCOMES A NEW DEAN PATRICK J. BORCHERS TAKES THE HELM



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It's 4:30 p.m. and Pat Borchers is catching his second wind and sipping the last of a six-pack of Diet Coke for the day.

Creighton's boyish-looking new Dean of the School of Law has his tie down and his feet up in the Faculty Lounge where colleagues kid him about Notre Dame's performance in a weekend ball game.

On the job since a pre-seven a.m. breakfast with alums, Borchers has taught a class (Civil Procedure), met with students, hunkered down with his administrative staff over an upcoming party for alums before a Jays' basketball game, talked with faculty about summer school schedules, research plans and who'll teach what next fall, gone up to the hill to a meeting about the budget, and

is getting ready for a reception at a law firm in order to meet more attorneys.

In the meantime, he has patiently helped some faculty—still troglodytes with the niceties of the computer—set up web pages for round-the-clock communication with the

students and kibitzed with colleagues on his way to the Coke machine.

The former physics student (his dad—Dr. Robert Borchers—is an internationally known nuclear scientist) and graduate of the University of California at Davis Law School, is trying to figure out where to fit in a couple of hours of research. He's a prolific writer, as a quick examination of his personal website demonstrates.

This newcomer to Nebraska left a job as Associate Dean at the Albany Law School in New York in a decision his wife, Judy, calls "the best decision we have ever made." Two of his kids are settled into the Omaha Catholic school system. Two older kids graduated from high school and are on the east coast pursuing post-secondary studies. A brand new baby, Kyle, keeps the entire Borchers household busy.

Pat Borchers was raised in Madison, Wisconsin, where his father was a scientist, dean and then vice chancellor at the University of Wisconsin. He followed in his dad's footsteps as an undergraduate at Notre Dame and then moved to the west coast, where he decided to shelve an interest in science and study law at U.C. Davis, a school within the prestigious University of California system.

While at U.C. Davis, Pat Borchers met his future wife, who was also a law student. After graduation, he had an opportunity to



Dean Borchers with first year students Hollee Mason, Chad Primmer, and Tessie Buttram



clerk for then-Ninth Circuit Judge Anthony Kennedy, now a Justice on the United States Supreme Court. Borchers got the coveted position largely because of his friendship with an eminent U.C. Davis professor, John Oakley, who had been a long-time friend of Kennedy. It didn't hurt that Creighton's new Dean had been first in his class, was elected to the Order of the Coif, and had been research assistant to the great scholar, Fritz Junger. The entire hiring process took less than 24 hours.

"That was an incredible experience," the Dean now recalls. His friendship with Justice Kennedy is responsible for the jurist's agreement to visit Creighton before the beginning of the October, 2000, term.

Borchers accepted a job as an associate in a 60-person Sacramento law firm following his clerkship. By then Judy Borchers had graduated and she began to practice in the California capital city as well. The young couple had their first child, Ryan, in 1986. Judy's two older kids Adam, now 20, and Tara, 21 were already a passion for Borchers. He coached them in athletics and set some kind of a record for attending their competitions. But the family with three kids and two working parents often found itself racing between child care, schools, activities and jobs. Pat and Judy had to make a profound decision: Should they remain practitioners in what would surely be tremendously successful, but hectic, careers, or should they follow their hearts and turn to academics?

Judy and Pat agreed that she could devote herself to the kids and he could immerse himself into intellectual challenges: research, teaching, perhaps administration.

This direction was, after all, "the family business." Pat Borchers was fortunate to

have made life-long friendships with great teachers at U.C. Davis who encouraged him to go into the academic life.

Despite the fact that he earned the largest bonus in the history of his firm, Borchers followed his heart, and, in 1990, accepted the invitation of an old friend who was acting dean at Albany to join the faculty.

In 1993, he was named one of the United States' best teaching law professors by The National Jurist. Borchers the teacher became Dean of Students at the school and, two and a half years later, was named Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, in charge of academics, faculty development, research and scheduling.

Borchers and Creighton found one another for several reasons. Under Creighton University policy, Larry Rafal's mandatory retirement from the deanship was about to occur after ten years at the Law School's helm. CU President Father Michael G. Morrison announced that there would be a national search for a replacement. Borchers had come to know two CU faculty members, Larry Teply and Ralph Whitten, through their mutual intellectual interests (currently, Whitten and Borchers serve as members of the Executive Committee of the Association of American Law Schools' Section on the Conflict of Laws). They immediately tossed his name into the hat and soon there was a consen-

sus that he was the person for the job. He was offered the CU job late in 1998.

Family logistical matters (Pat and Judy had a child just finishing high school), and the need to complete some unfinished business at Albany put off his arrival in Omaha until the summer of 1999.

But when he hit town, there was an explosion of activity as the new Dean undertook to know students, faculty, administrators, practicing lawyers and judges, the community, the Midwest, and members of the Creighton family all over America.

Intellectually restless, Borchers loves to write. He is currently the co-author of the eleventh edition of *Conflict of Laws: Cases and Materials*, with Peter Hay of Emory Law School and Russell Weintraub of the University of Texas. His interests include that topic, transnational litigation and arbitration. He has authored or co-authored a total of four books and some 20 articles. He has even produced four audio cassettes on the topic of Administrative Law.

At Creighton, the new Dean decided he would teach Civil Procedure to first year students. This served the goals of getting well-acquainted with other "newcomers" to the school, and satisfying his passion for the classroom.

"I care about educating students," he reflected, adding that if an institution is not succeeding there, "we better do something about it." Creighton's faculty and students, he quickly added, are engaged in a search not just for the law, but for the moral and ethical framework in which it can be used to serve society.

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Meanwhile this young whirlwind does not pause too long to talk about himself. He has a family to which he is deeply devoted. He has a faculty he relishes serving. He has students he teaches with talent and rigor. He has more alums to greet. By the end of his first academic year, he will have traveled to Washington, D.C., Kansas City, New York City, Wichita, the Twin Cities, St. Louis and Southern California, in addition to trips throughout Iowa and Nebraska to visit with the hundreds of men and women who have been to the Hilltop before him.

"Our alums want to know about the teachers who taught them. They're interested in how they can attract more CU lawyers to their towns. Those who have seen it want to comment on our new library. Nothing could be more fun than getting to know them," Borchers states.

As his first year winds down, Borchers is concerned with tuition increases, student admissions, placement, faculty research, improving technological services for the law school community, and being of service to the bench and bar.

But he'll work just that much harder, spend just enough more hours, to see his goals achieved. And in the process, he'll probably drink just one more Diet Coke.

IN MEMORIAM



Milton R. Abrahams

1905 – 2000

Creighton University School of Law pays
tribute to Milton R. Abrahams, a 1927

Creighton Law graduate and the namesake for the School of Law Legal Clinic. A professional and civic leader, Milt was a dear friend of the Law School who made a positive difference in the great scheme of things. Milt's passing, after a remarkable 73-year legal career, is noted with great sorrow, but his impact on the legal community and our lives will long be remembered.