

The Last WORD

By Edward J. Walters, Jr. and C. Frank Holthaus

A GATHERING OF EAGLES... AND 2 BUZZARDS

What could bring a World War II soldier specially trained in linguistics and designated for insertion behind Hitler's "Atlantic Wall" together with a gathering of judicial eagles for lunch in Baton Rouge? That's easy . . . Retired law professor George W. Pugh.

On an October Monday, George met with a group of former students and judges at Serop's Café in Baton Rouge, and the 91-year-old retired law professor of evidence and federal courts held court as he told stories about the "old" days and his beginning. A young soldier from Napoleonville, La., he was U.S. Army-trained in linguistics to speak "Parisian" French and was designated to be sent behind enemy lines. As it turned out, his final course was over in September 1944, the month the Allies retook Paris. As George's training was no longer needed, he was sent to the "Repo Depot," a location from which soldiers were dispatched to replace casualties of war. George was assigned to an Intelligence unit and, he says, laughingly, he became a jeep driver. In December 1944, as the Battle of the Bulge was raging, George was a mere 100 miles away.

George was 20 years old when he returned to Napoleonville and civilian life. He quickly completed undergraduate work at LSU and, in 1947, went directly into LSU Law School, enrolling in what was called the 12-month (in contrast to the nine-month) curriculum. As expected, George was an excellent student. He was second in his class. In his final year, Professor Ira S. Flory, from whom George had previously taken the course in federal courts and jurisdiction, passed away.

In George's final semester, Dean Paul M. Hebert asked him to teach the federal courts class to his own classmates. George's friend, Bob Jordy, was well entrenched as the number one student in the class. George joked about the irony. If he had given his friend Bob a "D" in the class, he would have risen from second to first in the class. But,



Luncheon attendees, seated from left, included Judge James L. Dennis, Judge James J. Brady, Professor George W. Pugh, C. Frank Holthaus and Judge John W. deGravelles. Standing from left, Richard P. Ieyoub, Edward J. Walters, Jr., Judge Jay C. Zainey, Judge Brian A. Jackson, Judge Douglas D. Dodd and Judge Shelley D. Dick.

Bob got the highest grade in George's class, too, which added to his number one ranking. George graduated second in the class and went to Yale to achieve his advanced degree in 1952. This is where he met and married his wife Jean. George returned to LSU and taught evidence and federal courts until his retirement in 1994. During those years, George's eyesight diminished; Jean, also a lawyer, read his students' final exams onto cassette tapes for George to listen to and grade.

Now retired, George meets for lunch three or four times a year with local judges, many of them his former students. The luncheon table is redolent with fascinating historical vignettes, stories of Louisiana politics and political figures, and the long saga of George's time and tenure teaching the law. No one is immune from George's keen questioning and grilling into the meaning of Chief Justice Roberts' recent opinion or the dissent of another Justice in another case. George remains fully abreast with the law.

On that October Monday, the luncheon in George's honor was held and everyone present was the richer for it. Attendees included U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge James L. Dennis, LSU class of 1962; former Louisiana Attorney General Richard P. Ieyoub, LSU class of 1972; U.S. District Judge John W. deGravelles, LSU class of

1974; U.S. District Judge Jay C. Zainey, LSU class of 1975; U.S. Chief District Judge Brian A. Jackson, Southern class of 1985; U.S. District Judge Shelley D. Dick, LSU class of 1988; U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Douglas D. Dodd, Stanford class of 1982; U.S. District Judge James J. Brady, LSU class of 1969; and Edward J. Walters, Jr. and C. Frank Holthaus, both LSU class of 1975. Except for Judges Jackson and Dodd, everyone at the table had been taught by George! But don't think that exempted them from George's questions.

Unfortunately, our co-honoree, retired law professor Frank L. Maraist, LSU class of 1958, could not make the luncheon. But, you guessed it . . . *George taught him, too!*

C. Frank Holthaus, a partner in the firm of deGravelles, Palmintier, Holthaus & Frugé, L.L.P., is certified in criminal trial law by the National Board of Legal Specialty Certification. He is a member of the adjunct faculty of Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center. He serves on the Louisiana State Bar Association's Legislation Committee. (fholthaus@dphf-law.com; 618 Main St., Baton Rouge, LA 70801-1910)

Edward J. Walters, Jr., a partner in the Baton Rouge firm of Walters, Papillion, Thomas, Cullens, L.L.C., is a former Louisiana State Bar Association secretary and editor-in-chief of the Louisiana Bar Journal. He is a current member of the Journal's Editorial Board. He is the chair of the LSBA Senior Lawyers Division and edited the Division's e-newsletter Seasoning. (walters@lawbr.net; 12345 Perkins Rd., Bldg. 1, Baton Rouge, LA 70810)