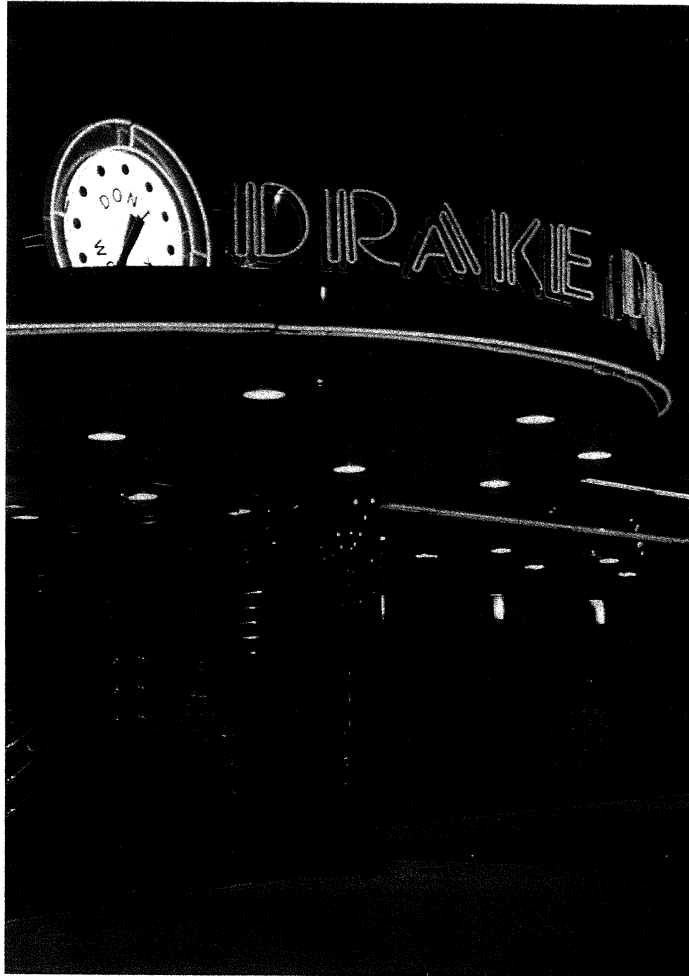


Perspectives



A SUPREME PERFORMANCE

His boss and associates were watching. The press box and public seating section were packed. His parents were there, the first time they had observed their son argue a case in court. This was no county courthouse, however. It was the United States Supreme Court.

"There was great pressure to do well," says Richard H. Doyle IV, LA'71, L'76. That's exactly what he did: Doyle, a partner in the Des Moines firm of Verne Lawyer & Associates, won his case, which has international significance for foreign product liability issues. The Supreme Court's ruling should make it easier for those suing foreign companies to collect records and other evidence (see sidebar).

"He was superb. Rick has a tremendous grasp of the law," says Verne Lawyer, L'49.

When Doyle, 38, found out the case would be argued in the nation's highest court, he and Nick Critelli, LA'66, L'67, and Mark Bennett, L'75, Des Moines attorneys, spent a Sunday afternoon "rehearsing" in the Drake Law School moot court room. Bennett also has argued a case in the Supreme Court.

"That was extremely valuable. The more prepared you are, the less nervous you'll be in the courtroom," Doyle says. "To not be prepared would be certainly foolish."

He began preparing long before

his day in the Supreme Court. A native of Mt. Prospect, IL, Doyle graduated with a liberal arts degree from Drake in 1967 and completed his law degree after serving two years in the Army.

"I had an excellent experience at Drake," he says. "I served as president of my fraternity, participated in various campus organizations and was president of the law fraternity. I don't think a person would have those opportunities at a larger institution. I made lifetime friendships."

He also served as a law clerk for the Iowa Academy of Trial Lawyers, where he met Verne Lawyer. After graduating, Doyle worked for a year in the Criminal Appeals Division of the Iowa Attorney General's Office and then joined Lawyer's firm. Those experiences made him a "veteran at arguing cases before courts of appeal," says Lawyer.

Despite his experience, Doyle went early to the Supreme Court to familiarize himself with the territory. "I spent all day watching the four cases argued before the court," he says. "I wanted to get a sense of the process, of the kinds of questions that were being asked."

He also studied proper Supreme Court etiquette. "I read that Justice Sandra O'Connor prefers to be addressed as 'Justice,' rather than as 'Madame Justice,'" he says. "In one of the cases I observed, a lawyer called her 'Mrs. Justice' and

'Madame Justice.' I don't think he ever recovered after that. Those were the little things I didn't want to worry about."

While Doyle and the case have received much press and attention from his peers, he hopes the experience will help him attain a personal goal rather than wealth as a trial



Richard Doyle addresses The Big Court.

lawyer. "I'd like to serve as a justice of an appellate court — either the Iowa Supreme Court or the state Court of Appeals," he says.

The case Richard Doyle argued in the U.S. Supreme Court began in August 1980, when a single-engine plane crashed on a private airstrip in Warren County, IA. The passenger and the two pilots survived and sued the French firm that manufactured the plane.

However, the French firm, Societe de Construction d'Avions de Tourism and its parent, Societe Nationale Industrielle Aerospatiale, refused to provide data on the plane's design. Since the data was located in France, the company said it was protected by the Hague Evidence Convention, a 17-nation treaty that settles dif-

ferences in the members' judicial systems.

The case landed in the Supreme Court after Aerospatiale appealed decisions by two lower courts that the Hague Convention doesn't protect the evidence from pretrial discovery. The Supreme Court's majority opinion — that federal courts can decide whether to require foreign companies to produce pretrial evidence in U.S. lawsuits — came down almost seven years after the plane crash.

"This case involves not only a private litigant, but also liability of foreign companies and inter-

national relations," says Doyle.

The case was sent back to the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, which signed orders again requesting data on the plane. In January, Doyle received from Aerospatiale a box full of airplane blueprints, assembly drawings and other data, all written in French. After the evidence is translated and analyzed, Doyle begins developing his client's original lawsuit. The trial date: April 3, 1989.

"It's funny to look at a box of documents and know how much time and effort it took to get it," he says.