



SERVICE TO SYRACUSE

RICHARD L. THOMPSON, who has long served the University in alumni leadership roles, will draw on experiences in business, government, and law as chairman of the Board of Trustees | BY DAVID MARC

RICHARD L. THOMPSON G'67 HAS a record of public service and philanthropy that includes memberships on the governing bodies of a half dozen nonprofit organizations, and he holds academic degrees from three alma maters, any of which would be eager to benefit from his experience in business, government, and law. Yet Thompson, who became the 22nd chairman of the Syracuse University Board of Trustees in May, has placed SU at the heart of his civic engagement activities. "One reason I accepted the position is the remarkable job Nancy Cantor has done in equipping the University and its graduates to compete in the 21st century," says Thompson, a senior counsel with the law firm of Patton Boggs LLP and a member of the bar of the U.S. Supreme Court. "The Chancellor has maintained global, national, and local focus on behalf of the University's interests—and that's exactly what we need to do. I'm especially impressed by the strong commitment she has made to the community. Central New York is the home of Syracuse University. The connection is intrinsic; she has made the relationship dynamic and mutually beneficial."

Thompson, who earned an M.A. degree in political science from the Maxwell School, joined the board in 2001 and has served on its budget, executive, and administrative operations committees. An enthusiastic supporter of the University whose ties include extensive family legacies, he began taking a leadership role in alumni efforts during the early 1980s as a member of the national committee that raised funds and oversaw construction of the Hildegard and J. Myer Schine Student Center. In the aftermath of the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, Thompson and his wife, Jean Thompson '66, were moved to make a significant gift to the Remembrance Scholarship Fund in memory of Jean's parents: John Phelan '43, who died in World War II combat

during Jean Thompson's infancy, and Jean Taylor Phelan '42, whose death had recently occurred. Remembrance Scholarships of \$5,000 are awarded annually to 35 SU seniors, one for each of the 35 SU students lost in the attack.

Jean Thompson shares her husband's enthusiasm for civic engagement. She has been active on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution and the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, and served the University as a member of the Washington, D.C., Advisory Board (1994-2006) and the College of Arts and Sciences Board of Visitors (2002-08). "Jean and I both have personal commitments to Syracuse, and her abilities as a planner and

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organizer are a big plus in everything we do for the University," Thompson says. The Thompsons have two daughters, Kristin (married to Chris Bonnaci) and Beth (married to Mike Power), and they have four grandchildren: Stephen (15) and Kaitlin Bonnaci (12) and Kenny (6) and Catie (4) Power.

A Central New York Family

Although they reside in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., the Thompsons have roots that run deep in Central New York. Born and raised in the Rochester area, Richard Thompson attended Rush-Henrietta High School, as did his late brother Robert '62, an educational administrator in Spencerport, New York. Thompson majored in history and political science at the University at Albany, graduating cum laude in 1966. That summer, he headed

for Syracuse to enroll in the Maxwell School's graduate program in political science. "For me, Maxwell was just a great place," Thompson says. "I really liked the university atmosphere and I thought I wanted to be a college professor." Asked about faculty mentors, Thompson doesn't hesitate to name Alan "Scotty" Campbell, who headed Maxwell's Metropolitan Studies Program at that time and later became the school's dean. "He was very enthusiastic and knowledgeable on the issues and problems of revitalizing cities—a very strong presence in the classroom," he says. Thompson also found influences outside the classroom at SU. "I didn't actually take a course with Mike Sawyer, the great constitutional law professor, but he was such a powerful thinker that he touched everyone in the University with his ideas," Thompson says. "And there was Donna Shalala [G'70, H'87], who was a doctoral student back then. She had a way of engaging everyone in important issues, whether you agreed with her or not." (see page 22)

The intellectual exhilaration Thompson experienced at Maxwell during the 1960s was interrupted by another feature of that decade, the Vietnam War. Shortly after completing work on his master's degree, Thompson received a U.S. Army commission and served a tour of duty in Vietnam with the signal corps. "I was very proud of being in the service, and I was given opportunities for leadership roles that you don't normally get when you're in your 20s, right out of school," he says. "I found the military an enormously broadening experience. The life lessons I learned on leadership and on dealing with diverse people continue to be helpful." Awarded the Bronze Star and the Army Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster, he was discharged from the service in 1970 at the rank of captain.

Some of Thompson's duties in the Army required him to become familiar

SU Board of Trustees Chairman Richard L. Thompson G'67 and his wife, Jean '66 (center), visit with trustee emeritus Charles Beach '58, G'67 and his wife, Beth, at the Trustee Dinner and Award Ceremony at the Carmelo K. Anthony Basketball Center in May.



with the Military Code of Justice, and the experience reawakened an old desire to study law. While preparing to apply to law school, an unexpected opportunity arose. John Terry, a New York State assemblyman from Syracuse was making a run for Congress, and he offered Thompson a job in his campaign. Terry was elected in November 1970, and he took Thompson with him to Washington as a staff member. "I enrolled in law school at Catholic University and attended night classes while I worked on Capitol Hill," Thompson says. "It took me four years, but when I graduated, I became staff director and chief minority counsel for the House Committee on Government Operations." Recalling those years, Thompson is wistful about a bygone era in American politics. "Congress was a different place," he says. "There was a lot more working across the aisles. The goal was to get things done, and to accomplish anything, you had to have people from both parties working on it." Thompson points out that this spirit prevailed even during the Watergate investigations, which took place during his years as a congressional staffer and counsel.

During the '80s and '90s, Thompson worked for Squibb, and then for Bristol-Myers Squibb, after the merger of the pharmaceutical giants in 1989. He rose to the top echelon of management as senior vice president for public policy and government affairs, leading a 34-member global staff, formulating major public policy positions, and representing the company's CEO within the industry. A noteworthy achievement during Thompson's 26 years with the company was his successful integration of the Bristol-Myers and Squibb public affairs staffs into a single team following the merger. "A lot of good management lessons came out of that," Thompson says. "The first is that it is always worthwhile to give full attention to other points of view. Nobody has a monopoly on the truth.

Opinions you may initially disagree with can become compelling—but you'll never know unless you listen. Secondly, if you're in a leadership role, you've got to clearly acknowledge the value of each individual's contribution, and you've got to do that as often as it is merited. Recognizing individuals is what makes collaboration possible."

Owning the Future

Thompson has shared the benefits of his experiences in government and the private sector with the University, serving on the advisory boards of both the Maxwell and Whitman schools. Among the many assets he brings to his role as board chair, perhaps none is more timely than his expertise in matters of intellectual property. Partnerships that generate new inventions can create huge revenue streams for the University, while helping to attract top faculty members and students, as well as valuable research grants. Thompson is enthusiastic about current SU partnerships with such world-class companies as international banking corporation JP-Morgan Chase and Welch Allyn, a maker of precision medical instruments located in nearby Skaneateles Falls, New York, and he wants to see the University pursue more high-caliber initiatives of this type. He also believes the University should be prepared for patent law reforms, which he feels are inevitable in the face of spiraling technology. "Intellectual property is an economic engine for this country and arguments about it go right to the heart of American beliefs about freedom and progress," Thompson says. "There is a school of thought that regards patents as obstacles to progress, depriving people of the freedom to innovate. But without pat-

ent protection, the market would quickly be flooded with copies, leaving no return for investors who take risks. As a result, incentive to invest in innovation would be destroyed." The nature of contemporary technology has added a new wrinkle to the debate, according to Thompson. For example, the invention of a new computer chip may enable someone else to create a life-saving medical device. Is that medical device a new invention, or is it an applied variation of someone else's intellectual property? The moral dimension is daunting: Does the chip inventor have the right to delay development of a life-saving device? "The definition of *uniqueness* is the task we face," Thompson says, cutting to the chase. "It's a challenge we're required to meet if we are going to maintain an innovative economy."

With economic hard times affecting educational institutions of every type, Thompson sees reasons to be encouraged by steps Syracuse is taking to ensure its future, especially in its pursuit of new geographical opportunities. "We are creating multifaceted assets by increasing our activities in Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Atlanta, Miami, and elsewhere," he says. "These new Syracuse 'footprints,' along with Lubin House in Manhattan and Paul Greenberg House in Washington, are expanding our applicant pool beyond our traditional base in the Northeast, solidifying our relationships with current students and parents, helping us create networks of career contacts, enhancing the curriculum with new academic programs, and providing focal points for lifetime connections with alumni." Thompson, who is active in the D.C. Regional Council, participated in send-off events for SU students this fall in Baltimore and

Bethesda, and points with pride to the student recruitment work being done by Greenberg House. “We had 150 students from the Baltimore-Washington area come to Syracuse this fall—the largest number ever,” he says. “Under the direction of Ann Yockey [G’83], and with the continuing support of Paul Greenberg [’65], Syracuse has been able to establish a regional ‘brand’ that runs from southern Pennsylvania to the West Virginia border.”

No Rest for the Weary

In his remarks to the board last spring, Thompson enumerated five priorities for his tenure as chair. “The most important immediate goal, from an economic standpoint, is bringing The Campaign for Syracuse to its successful conclusion,” he says. “We’re on the cusp of completing a billion-dollar campaign, something we’ve never undertaken before. That’s a remarkable achievement and it speaks well of everyone involved.” Anticipating no rest for the weary at the campaign’s end, he has made finding new sources of

revenue another chief concern. “Projects that generate new income for the University can have an enormously positive effect by relieving pressure on student costs and setting faculty free to do what they do best,” he says. A third priority is trustee engagement. “How can we put all of the resources and talents of the board members to their most effective use on behalf of the University?” Thompson asks. One strategy he points to is geographical organization of trustees, which has obvious value as the University expands its reach, but also has applications closer to the Hill. For example, Trustee Judy Mower ’66, G’73, G’80, G’84 heads a group of board members residing in Central New York who act as advocates for University programs and policies within the region.

Looking beyond the figures in the ledger to their purpose, Thompson has set two priorities for the board’s relationship to other components of the University community. “I want to increase communication between the board and the faculty,” he says. “Last

spring, I had lunch with 12 faculty members. We just went around the table, introducing ourselves and talking about issues that are important to us. I learned more about the needs of the University from that open discussion than I could have gained from any formal meeting. We’ve got to have more of that if we’re going to achieve full collaboration.” To that same end, Thompson wants to open opportunities of direct communication between trustees and students. “We’re really in this for the students, and understanding their needs is critical,” he says.

There is one student need that has already been identified—and its implications weigh heavily on American higher education and on the families and individuals who shape their dreams through its lens. “All of the priorities I’ve discussed lead back to this: The growth of the cost of a private education has to be addressed by the trustees,” Thompson says. “Syracuse University will not accept the limitations of becoming an institution where education is only available to those who can afford it.” ◀◀

Eight Join Board of Trustees

The following eight individuals were elected to the University’s Board of Trustees last spring:

Darlene T. DeRemer ’77, G’79, of Wrentham, Massachusetts, managing partner at Grail Partners LLC, an advisory merchant bank that serves the investment management industry.

Nicholas M. Donofrio G’71, H’11, of Ridgefield, Connecticut, retired IBM executive who led the corporation’s technology and innovation strategies from 1997 until 2008. He currently serves as an IBM fellow emeritus, the company’s highest technical honor.

David G. Edelstein ’78, of Evanston, Illinois, recently retired vice president of supply chain management and project management at Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics.

Christine E. Larsen G’84, of Montclair, New Jersey, executive vice president and head of mortgage servicing at JPMorgan Chase. She also is managing the bank’s response to the Federal Reserve Bank and the Comptroller of the Currency consent orders for home lending.

Samuel G. Nappi, of Pompey, New York, founder and chairman of Alliance Energy Group LLC, and Harmony Productions.

Mark A. Neporent L’82, of Armonk, New York, chief operating officer, general counsel, and senior managing director since 1998 for Cerberus Capital Management, a private equity company.

Reinaldo Pascual ’85, of Atlanta, Georgia, partner at Paul Hastings LLP in the corporate practice with a focus on mergers and acquisitions, corporate

finance and securities, private equity, and investment management.

Brian D. Spector ’78, of Livingston, New Jersey, senior partner in the law firm Spector & Ehrenworth PC of Florham Park, New Jersey. The firm specializes in commercial litigation, bankruptcy and creditors’ rights, commercial transactions, real estate, and casino regulatory law.