



## Adjunct: The Law and Dr. McGuire

by Bill Simons, Vice President for Academics



he Hollywood image of the professor is perhaps best personified by John Houseman's portrayal of Professor Kingsfield in *The Paper Chase*, a well-established, well-paid, full-time, tenured faculty member with the freedom to teach his (her) class as he (she) chooses," notes union leader Sandra Feldman. "If only life were like the movies," Feldman ruefully observes. "Today 43 percent of the nation's faculty are part-timers, and the ratio of part-time to full-time grows larger every year. While many of these instructors are excellent teachers, and expect to be treated accordingly, the truth is somewhat different."

Our adjuncts receive too little remuneration and too little recognition. They render significant contributions to the college despite encountering a myriad of obstacles. And each has a distinctive story.

Dr. John T. McGuire, Esquire, is an adjunct in the SUCO History Department. A talented and versatile American historian, he is able to teach anything from an introductory survey to a senior seminar. Recipient of a Franklin D. and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute Grant, John was selected for *Who's Who in America*.

An effective teacher, John not only knows his material thoroughly but possesses a talent for dramatizing it. Irony, revealing vignettes, and telling quotes leaven his empiricism, cogent organization, and thoughtful analysis. Using his 6'5", matinee idol appearance to advantage, John roams the classroom, stimulating student discussion.

John's love of learning is contagious. He possesses four degrees—a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Scranton, a J.D. from the University of Buffalo Law School, and a Ph.D. from Binghamton University. At Binghamton, he served apprenticeships under Katherine Kish-Sklar, a specialist in women's history, and Melvyn Dubofsky, noted for his labor studies. John's own dissertation, "A Catalyst for Reform: The Women's Joint Legislative Conference (WJLC) and Its Fight for Labor Legislation in New York State, 1918-1933," documents the successful fight to reduce the work week and establish the minimum wage in New York State. Beginning with the factory investigations of Belle Moskowitz and Frances Perkins, both amalgams of politics and idealism, John depicts the Women's Joint Legislative Conference as a bridge between Progressive and New Deal reform. On November 16, 2001, he presented a well received paper, based on his dissertation, at the Social Science History Association conference in Chicago.

We all have bills to pay, and 34 year old John McGuire is no exception. Receiving \$2,250 per course as an Oneonta adjunct, John needs other employment to piece together a living income. He has taught, on a part-time basis, at Broome Community College and Binghamton University, and John maintains a private law practice in Vestal. These

responsibilities, which entail considerable commuting, curtail him from indulging his passion for golf.

A wry Irish wit helps John handle the demands of his hectic schedule. Retaining perspective amidst tension is nothing new to John. For four years, he was a trial attorney for the United States Department of Justice. As the chief litigator, he won convictions in five out of six cases against predatory corporations.

The practice of law will always be part of John's life. However, like former President Woodrow Wilson, another attorney who earned a Ph.D. in history, it is Clio to whom John gives his primary professional allegiance. Serving as a trial attorney, John developed a facility for confronting difficult questions, an attribute that serves him well as a teacher. Moreover, the litigator's ability to gather, evaluate, and present evidence are skills relevant to those of the historian. A lawyer attempting to convince a jury of the significance of the issues raised is akin to a professor of history presenting an interpretation of the past to undergraduates. It was as a lawyer that this instructor of history first learned the power of voice, eye, and gesture in holding an audience's attention. Bringing energy and careful preparation to the classroom, John successfully demonstrates to students that "history is not just a dry recital of facts."

Witnessing the human condition in criminal and civil cases nurtured a compassion and composure that shapes John's interaction with students. Years of conducting interrogations nurtured an interest in oral history. And compiling dense legal briefs gave John a respect for detail apparent in his historical research. Perusal of the *Binghamton Journal of History*, for which he served as editor-in-chief, attests to John's ability to make the past accessible.

A visceral idealism animates John McGuire. He displays a strong sense of public service. As an attorney, he takes on only those cases he believes in, and many of these he generously does *pro bono*. Membership on the board of directors of both the Peace Action of Broome County and the Legal Aid for Broome and Chenango Counties underline his devotion to social justice. And John's doctoral dissertation, focused on labor legislation, as well as his affiliations, attests to his commitment to union solidarity. Our Oneonta Chapter of UUP is proud to represent John McGuire.

John McGuire's story helps to put a face on adjuncts. There are many outstanding adjuncts on our campus with fascinating stories. The *Sentinel* will feature additional adjunct profiles in subsequent issues.

