

# GRADUATION '97

## Families' high school legacy proudly endures

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

When Judge Francis Affronti graduated from Aquinas Institute in 1959, he may have envisioned his future sons walking through the same halls.

But a daughter?  
"Absolutely not," stated Affronti, who serves as a New York State Supreme Court judge in Rochester.

In those days, the only time you might see a girl around Aquinas was at a football game or other special event. That all changed in 1982, when the school ended its longstanding male-only student policy.

The new coeducational environment opened the possibility for Affronti's youngest child, Leslie, to earn an Aquinas diploma.

"It was very probable, then, that she would be joining the ranks," said Affronti, whose family attends Sacred Heart Cathedral.

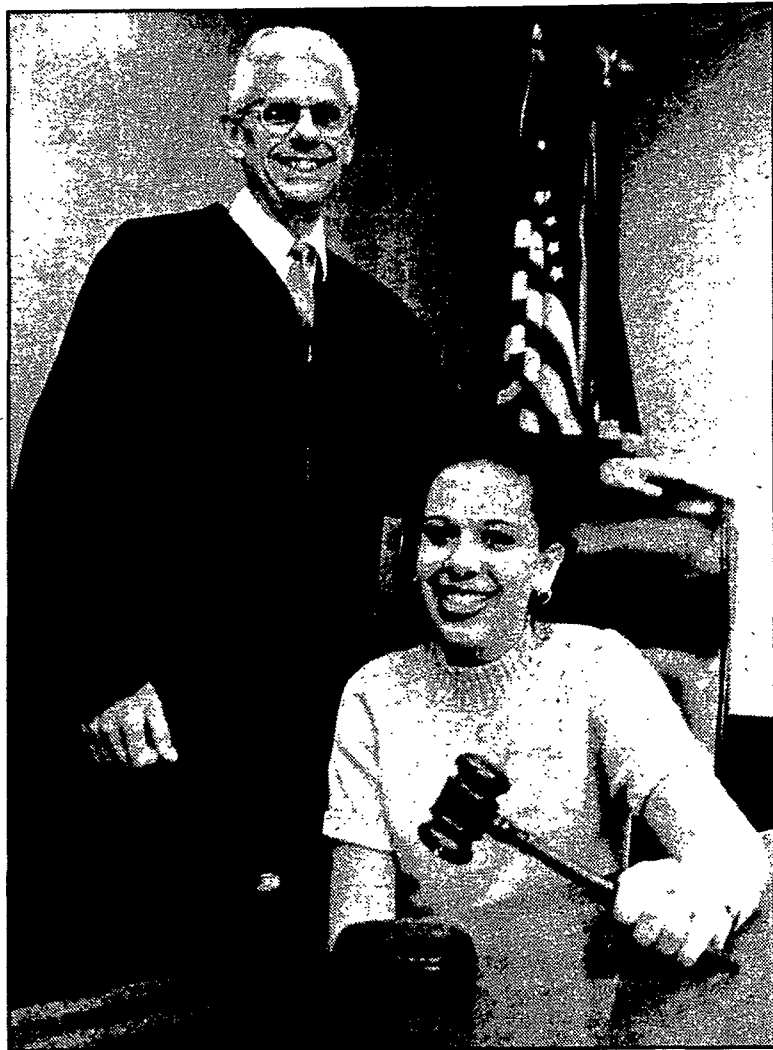
Leslie recalled that she, also, was leaning toward the possibility of attending Aquinas as she neared high-school age.

"I really had my heart set on Aquinas. I wanted to continue the tradition," Leslie said.

On June 28, she will indeed continue that tradition as she joins her father and three brothers as Aquinas graduates.

Leslie is one of several graduating seniors who have ended up at the same Catholic high school as at least one parent. This was doubly true for Katie Murphy, whose parents, John (class of 1958) and Pat ('64), both graduated from Elmira Notre Dame.

John and Pat acknowledged that they'd always planned to send their four children to Notre



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

New York State Supreme Court Justice Francis Affronti will soon see his daughter Leslie graduate from his alma mater, Aquinas Institute.

Dame.

"We both came from very conservative Catholic families. We said, 'Yeah, positively, if Notre Dame was still there, that's where they'd go,'" Pat Murphy said.

"We wouldn't think twice about not having them go. It was a given," John added. The Murphys, parishioners at Elmira's Our Lady of Lourdes Church, will see Katie graduate June 21.

A multi-generational connection also exists between the Roehrig family and McQuaid Jesuit High School. Dave, who graduated June 8, is the seventh Roehrig to earn his diploma from the all-boys' school. He was preceded by two older brothers and three uncles as well as his father, Dana (class of '68).

Dana is pleased that McQuaid's commencement ceremony has gone largely unchanged.

"The thing that makes it so indelible is the class and sophistication when McQuaid graduates its kids: white tuxes and red boutonniere, at the Eastman Theatre," remarked Dana, whose family attends St. Pius X Church in Chili.

Some schools' daily dress policies, on the other hand, have changed since the 1960s. Catherine Nowak, a 1967 Our Lady of Mercy High School graduate, observed that "they're a little more flexible with the uniforms" at her alma mater.

"When we were there, everyone had to wear jumpers and oxford shirts," she said. Her daughter, Beth, will graduate from the all-girls' school June 24. The Nowaks are parishioners at St. Joseph's Church in Penfield.

Katie Murphy reported that dress standards have been similarly relaxed at Elmira Notre Dame.

"You used to only be able to wear dress shoes, and now I wear sneakers," Katie remarked.

One way to compare style trends, R.J. Passalacqua discovered, was to dig out his parents' yearbook. His reaction upon seeing the lengthy hairdos of high-school students in the 1970s?

"Shock," said R.J., who will graduate from Geneva De Sales High School June 21. His parents, Ron and Lorraine, are 1974 De Sales graduates.

"That's when (Ron) had hair,"



Nazareth Academy alumna Linda Keilman and her daughter Beverly sit in a homeroom they each occupied (above); and R.J. Passalacqua will soon be a De Sales graduate like his parents Lorraine and Ron.



Lorraine joked.

The most significant change at Bishop Kearney, according to Steve and Barb Scott (classes of '73 and '76, respectively), was the dissolution of single-sex wings. Beginning in 1987, all classes at BK combined males and females.

Katie Scott added that her father was a bit taken aback by the school's technological modifications.

"He walked into the computer center one day and said 'Whoa, no more typewriters,'" remarked Katie, who will graduate June 22.

Meanwhile, Linda and Beverly Keilman observed how course offerings have changed with the times at Nazareth Academy. Linda (class of '65) noted with some remorse that sewing and cooking classes are no longer prerequisites at Nazareth.

But now, Beverly said, "We have the ASCENT (engineering) program, and more of a concentration in physics." Beverly will graduate from the all-girls' school June 23.

"Yeah, but my daughter can't cook!" Linda laughed. The Keilmans are parishioners at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

On the other hand, Linda noted that she shares a neat geographic bond with her daughter: Both occupied Room 105 for homeroom when they were freshmen, 32 years apart.

Apparently, Beth Nowak's mother recalls Our Lady of Mercy's layout just as clearly. As a

freshman, Beth recalled, "I was worried I'd get lost, but she'd tell me that it's not that hard. She'd tell me where some of the classrooms were."

Meanwhile, Dave Roehrig rates his entire experience at McQuaid Jesuit as unforgettable.

"There's something different, something special about McQuaid," Dave said. "If I had a chance to send my kids there, I would."

A similar pride, along with nostalgia, have been among the many emotions for Steve and Barb Scott as they await Katie's commencement at Kearney.

"It will be very sentimental to me, watching my daughter go through everything I did," said Barb, whose family attends Church of Christ the King.

"I'll be a wreck," Steve admitted.

R.J. Passalacqua's parents are also not holding back on sentiment.

"We've already gone through quite a few tears just thinking about it," said Lorraine, whose family attends St. Stephen's Church in Geneva. "It's almost like a dream come true that we graduated from DeSales and now our son is graduating from there."

"It's a little extra sweet this year," remarked Ron, who is scheduled to give a speech at the De Sales commencement. Ron, a sergeant with the Geneva Police Department, is also a Board of Trustees member and assistant baseball coach at De Sales.

Even state Supreme Court justices are allowed to wear their hearts on their sleeves at such functions.

"Just the anticipation is very nostalgic," Francis Affronti said. "My wife (Heather) and I probably never thought we'd see the day our youngest graduated. It becomes a very emotional, but very proud event."

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