Alumnae Conference

A female judge has "significant potential for advancing the concerns of women," but she is limited in the types of actions she can take. U.S. District Chief Judge Cornelia G. Kennedy told an audience of about 75 women in the first annual U-M Law School Alumnae Conference in the fall.

Kennedy, chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, is the first woman to hold such a position. She is a 1947 graduate with distinction from U-M Law School.

Kennedy warned that, under the Code of Judicial Conduct, federal judges are not allowed to make public statements on policy matters, solicit funds, confer with executive federal judges, or participate in political matters. A judge is also bound by the law and "must not be tempted to create one set of rules for women and another set of rules for another group of people," she said.

For instance, in sex discrimination cases, the remedies a federal judge may employ are bound by statute and reviewed by appellate courts. "A female judge will bring disrespect on herself for basing her decision on a sex-related basis," Kennedy said.

Despite these limitations, she said, there is a great opportunity for the female judge to promote the interests of women by striving to be outstanding in her work. "To achieve the same level of success, women have to be more proficient than men," Kennedy continued, suggesting that excellent performance by women in the legal profession will open the doors for greater numbers of women in law and on the bench.

The life of a federal judge is not an easy one, according to Kennedy. She described her average work day as beginning at 7:40 a.m. and ending at 6 p.m., with "homework" every night and every weekend.

Women are still underrepresented in the legal profession and especially on the federal bench. Kennedy said half of the women on the bench have been selected in the last two years, she noted.

Because the Code of Judicial Conduct prohibits any women presently on the bench to promote the candidacy of other women for judgeships at any level, Kennedy said she was prohibited from supporting her older sister for a judicial position. Her sister, also a U-M Law School alumna, is Michigan District Judge Margaret Schafer of Farmington Hills.

Commenting on the possibility of a woman on the Supreme Court, Kennedy said she did not want to see a "token woman," but that she supports the idea of "women—lots of women—at all levels of the judiciary, including the Supreme Court."

It is "ironic," she remarked, that justice is portrayed as a woman, yet there are so few women in the judiciary.—Mark Simonian

Palmer Honored

George Palmer, professor emeritus of law at the U-M, was honored recently by the law faculty for his newly published four-volume treatise on restitution. Joining Palmer at a faculty luncheon was his former U-M colleague, John Dawson, who in 1969 co-authored a casebook on restitution with Palmer. After spending 30 years on the Michigan faculty, Dawson taught at Harvard for 17 years and has been at Boston University since 1973.

Prof. Palmer retired from law teaching at U-M at the end of the winter, 1978, semester, after serving since 1946. His areas of specialty are trusts and estates, and restitution.