“Bittersweet,” was Dean Evan Caminker’s description for the evening’s celebration. Family members, friends, and colleagues gathered to celebrate the rich and rewarding careers of three inimitable faculty members—Richard O. Lempert, ’68, Philip Soper, and James Boyd White—but they also were marking the three scholars’ retirement from active teaching after together contributing a century of service to the Michigan Law family.

Of Lempert, a former U-M Sociology Department chairman whose energy and enthusiasm are legendary, Caminker noted “when he has a good idea he shoots me an e-mail” and during his deanship has sent “an average of one every five days.” Again slipping behind the usual scenes, Caminker shared photos of himself and Soper donning costumes and dueting on “Take a Chance on Me,” thus debunking the image of the tall, well-dressed Soper as “very mild mannered” and always calm. Of White, Caminker said, “he is nothing if not inspirational.”

The evening also offered colleagues the opportunity to praise and share anecdotes about the retiring teachers:

- Emeritus Professor David Chambers (seriously) and Professor Samuel Gross (humorously) drew attention to Lempert’s devotion to social justice and statistics-reinforced social science research.
- Professors Peter Westen and Donald Regan described Soper’s analytical frame of mind and devotion to the issues of “What is law?” and what Regan called “the hardest question in moral philosophy”—“How do you account for the fact that I may be wrong?”
- Professor Rebecca Scott praised White, whose U-M résumé also includes appointments in English and classical studies, for his longtime leadership of the Michigan Society of Fellows, and Professor Bruce Frier, while noting his “remarkable academic career,” noted ruefully that White’s departure from the faculty also means that members of the Michigan Law family will have fewer opportunities to talk with his wife, Mary.

Lempert, who joined the faculty in 1968, praised his good fortune in joining the faculty when he was only 25 and being able to enjoy the camaraderie of colleagues for so long. Soper, a member of the faculty since 1973, complimented the Law School’s diversity, tolerance, and encouragement of ideas, and “for that, the Law School is home.” White, who came to Michigan from Chicago in 1983 because he was drawn to its intellectual energy and variety, reported that “once I arrived here I had no major desire to leave.”