Kamisar honored on being named Distinguished University Professor

At a formal banquet at the Lawyer's Club on December 5, 1992, the Law School honored Yale Kamisar for his appointment to a University-wide chair as Clarence Darrow Distinguished University Professor. This chair is the highest academic honor the University awards. In selecting Kamisar, the Regents of the University recognized a lifetime of outstanding and distinguished scholarship on issues of criminal law, constitutional law, and the administration of criminal justice.

Kamisar's chair is named after a person who was probably the most famous lawyer in American history, but one whose only formal legal education consisted of attending the “Law Department” (as it was then called) of the University of Michigan from 1877-78. After one year Darrow decided to prepare for the bar exam by studying in a lawyer's office (a common practice then). He was acutely aware of the financial burden his law school studies were imposing on his older sister and brother. (Tuition was $50 a year, but evidently that was a lot of money in those days.)

Kamisar was toasted and roasted at the dinner in remarks by Dean Lee Bollinger and by Professors Jerold Israel, Jeffrey Lehman, and Theodore St. Antoine. Israel has co-authored three widely used casebooks with Kamisar. Lehman is a former law student of Kamisar's (as is Lehman's wife, Diane). St. Antoine joined the U-M law faculty the same year Kamisar did (1965) and they have been close friends ever since.

Employing both respect and humor in his commentary, Bollinger narrated an extended slideshow of Kamisar’s life from birth through college (where he was voted the best college sportswriter in the NYC area) and the Korean war (where he saw combat as an infantry lieutenant) to academia. Kamisar’s three sons, lawyers Gordon and Jon and tennis pro David, all came for the event.

Kamisar thanked the audience for its kindness and support over the years, and paid special tribute to his wife, Christine, for her constant support and good judgment. He spoke movingly about why he is driven to write, and to keep writing, on such issues as confessions; search and seizure; and death, dying and euthanasia.

Professor Yale Kamisar, center, was joined by his wife Christine and Dean Lee Bollinger in the Lawyer's Club at the December banquet where he was roasted, toasted and recognized for his appointment to the Clarence Darrow Distinguished University Professorship.