

Jerry Holub

Portrait of a Professional

By Audrey Cielinski Kessler

Honesty. Integrity. Sincerity. Compassion.

The judgment is unanimous. From colleagues, friends and family alike, these and similar words figure prominently in characterizations of Jerome "Jerry" Holub, a bankruptcy and collections lawyer in Akron for nearly half a century and this year's recipient of the Akron Bar Association's Professionalism Award. The award recognizes an individual who consistently shows exemplary dedication to the standards of the legal profession and demonstration of integrity and humanitarian activities in the community.

The traits that so many have used to describe Holub are ones that have served him well in his career as a lawyer and as a husband, father and friend.

These traits that have brought the Akron native many awards and accolades over the years. But the one from the Bar Association was an award he had not been expecting, given the caliber of the three previous recipients: John A. Schwemler, a long-time commercial law and bankruptcy expert, and Bradford M. Gearinger and S. Samuel

Nukes, both past presidents of the Bar Association.

"I was surprised and shocked," said Holub. "I've got a lot of awards lately, but a lot of times you get things you could expect. But I didn't expect this one. I really had no inkling I would be considered. Considering the other people who have won it before -

they're very erudite practitioners - and I don't consider myself in that category."

But apparently many people do, including Marc Gertz, partner with the Goldman & Rosen law firm in Akron.

"I can't think of a more worthy recipient of this particular award than Jerry Holub," Gertz said. "Jerry has

"He has always been one of the finest examples of professionalism and professional courtesy in our profession."

-Marc Gertz, Goldman & Rosen

helped launch so many careers, including my own. He has always been one of the finest examples of professionalism and professional courtesy in our profession."

The man who appointed Holub to the post of Chapter 13 trustee 37 years ago, Judge Harold F. White of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Akron, would agree with Gertz' assessment of Holub.

"He follows the judicial code of conduct as an attorney to the letter, and he's also very compassionate in his dealings, especially these people [in Chapter 13] who have economic problems," White said. "He has a reputation as being very fair and diligent."

And it is this reputation for fairness and compassion that perhaps explains why Holub holds the distinction of being the longest-serving



Jerry Holub and colleagues: (left to right) Marc P. Gertz, Frederick S. Corns, Holub and Kurt R. Weitendorf (Photo courtesy Akron Bar Association).



Jerry Holub shows off some of the sports memorabilia in his office (Photo by Bruce Ford).

Chapter 13 trustee in the country.

While Gertz, White and others who know Holub agree that the Bar Association award was well deserved and that Holub is at least on par with past recipients, Holub's reaction is indicative of the way others perceive that he lives his life in general: unpretentiously and with humility.

"Jerry has always been a behind-the-scenes kind of guy," said Gertz. "He's never been a glory seeker in any way, shape or form."

When told of Holub's having been chosen as this year's recipient of the annual award, law school buddy and Youngstown lawyer Gene Fox replied, "He won that too? I'm not surprised."

The two men, who met in 1949 in law school at Ohio Northern University in Ada, Ohio, continue to meet socially despite the roughly 50-mile distance between Akron and Youngstown. Most recently, Holub traveled to Youngstown for his friend's retirement party. It was a gesture that Fox found touching.

"He came over even for that," said Fox. "It really was a pleasant surprise. He just remembers people. I was totally shocked to see him there. Once he's your friend, he's your friend. He stands by you through thick and through thin."

Holub's journey to this pinnacle of his career began in Akron on December 7, 1922, in the West Hill neighborhood of Akron when Ben and Rebecca Holub became the proud parents of their first child. Little did they know then that nearly a half century later, their only son would have accomplished so much and endeared himself to so many. But they would not have been surprised. The signs were

there early on. As a youth he had a newspaper delivery route and played baseball on a VFW league alongside childhood friend Marvin Wein, who now owns the Holub Furniture Company in Akron and still meets socially with his friend of 65 years.

As a student at Akron's Buchtel High School, Holub added participation in several clubs to his list of activities along with a spot on the school softball team that won the city championship in 1940.

"I loved to play softball," said Holub of his involvement in the sport as a youth. He is, however, quick to note that while his high school team won

the championship, "I didn't play a lot, but I was on the team."

As a youth, Holub also collected stamps, a hobby which helped him learn about geography, and read the *World Almanac* cover-to-cover. Reading such a scholarly tome may seem to some an unusual pursuit for a teenager, but as Holub explained, "you pick up a lot of information about stuff that interests you." And there was much that piqued Holub's interest, not the least of which were sports and the pursuit of a career as a sports writer.

To Holub, the next step after graduating from high school in 1940 was obvious. "I didn't hesitate. I was going to college. There was no question about that."

So it was on to Ohio State University and the study of Journalism and a career as a sports writer. The pursuit of that dream, however, was cut short with the onset of World War II and a stint in the Army as a field artillery recorder, a job Holub likened to keeping score at a ball game. But instead of tracking points won by each team, Holub was keeping track of the readings used on the guns and the number of rounds fired.

After the war ended, Holub returned home with a new perspective and a new career choice – law – that he would pursue after enrolling at the University of Michigan law school in 1947 and attending classes there for two years before transferring to Ohio Northern University to complete his law degree. "I saw all the injustices in the Army," said Holub of his decision to pursue law rather than sports writing. He described the Army as being "very picayunie" and a place where much of what he saw about how the



An early photo of little Jerry Holub, born December 9, 1922 (Photo courtesy Margerie Holub).

Army operates he did not agree with.

"They did things by the numbers," said Holub. "People were subject to punishment for things without an opportunity to be heard or anything like that. It wasn't that it was serious, but it just bothered you."

He noted that the injustices he witnessed were more common in the United States than overseas in combat, which for Holub was a four-month period from February to May of 1945. He served then with the 69th Division in Germany and recalled the time in 1945 when his division met up with the Russians – they were moving west and Holub's division was moving east – around the Elba River. "I remember when we first got into combat," said Holub, "the thing that bothered everybody was that [coach] Paul Brown left Ohio State. That's what bothered them more than the Germans." Holub attributed their concern in part to the captain-elect of Ohio State's 1943 football team being a member of the division and that "we were great sports fans in those days – still are."

The change in career plans was, perhaps, a meshing of one aspect of a philosophy that guides Holub in both his professional and personal lives. "You try to do some good for people," said Holub. "It's the idea of 'why are we here?'. You're going to be remembered for what you do for others, not what you do for yourself. You try to help people and do the job you're supposed to do. The big thing is to help others."

It's a philosophy that Holub lives daily. "He's very caring, in a quiet sort of way," said Carol Holub-Curtis, Holub's eldest daughter. Her brother would agree. "I was a difficult child,"



Holub originally attended Ohio State University with the intention of being a sports writer (Photo courtesy Margery Holub).

said Alan Holub. "I had my issues. [But] what always struck me was that he always supported me, always gave me unconditional love through thick and through thin. If I can be half the person he is, then at the end of my life people can say [I lived a worthy life]."

By 1951, Holub had graduated from Ohio Northern with a law degree and no preconceived notions about what to expect from his chosen career, except that he would be practicing law with his father, whose specialty was corporate law. "My biggest problem," said Holub, "was getting through [school]. Once I got through, I had a desk waiting for me." It's an advantage he is grateful to have had. "I admit, I didn't know anything when I got out of law school. I didn't know what I

was going to. But I got into collections work and found my niche in general practice."

For the next 15 years, Holub worked with his father until the elder Holub passed away in 1966. The younger Holub kept the office running, retaining some of his father's collections clients. The corporate clients, for the most part, sought other counsel.

Starting out in the legal profession is different now, Holub cautioned. And more difficult because of increased competition among more lawyers. "Unless you've got a connection," said Holub, "it's rough." While he acknowledges that Akron is not at the saturation point in terms of having one lawyer for every two persons, "we're pretty close." Holub also touts the study of law as a good thing, even if one does not pursue a career as a lawyer. "It's good background. But unless you've got some kind of connection where to get started, you could be the most brilliant person in the

world but if you can't get started, you'll starve to death."

But Holub didn't starve, and indeed he prospered. He was able to share that prosperity and success with the woman he married on December 7, 1952, the former Margery Schmitman. It turned out to be a whirlwind romance. To hear Margery tell it, she met her future husband at a party in Canton on Labor Day weekend. Her date got sick, so Margery went to the party by herself. The couple met that night, were engaged one week later and married the following December. The story the couple's children were told, said Holub-Curtis, was this: "He had the beverage, and she had the opener."

In addition to Carol, a senior sales

director with Mary Kay, the couple had two other children: Alan, the owner of Shade Tree Auto Body in Vail, Colorado, and a daughter, Reba (named after Holub's mother), who was killed in a 1978 automobile accident at the age of 24. The death, while tragic and reminiscent of his own mother's death by the same means in 1950, did not keep Holub from pursuing his interests in writing and activities aimed at helping others. "You just go at it one day at a time and try to keep on doing your job and helping people. That's the big thing," said Holub.

For Holub, one day at a time did not necessarily mean one thing at a time. He typically went at it in a big way, taking on tasks and projects when asked or when others declined or when he simply thought he had a good idea that should be pursued. Like the time 25 years ago when he had an idea for an article for the Bar Association's *Examiner Magazine*. Holub asked someone to write the article, but that person turned him down. "So I ended up doing it," Holub recalled. He's been writing for the magazine ever since, contributing an article each month.

"He's always doing two or three things at the same time," said Richard T. Cunningham, a trial and appellate lawyer and partner with the Akron law firm of Amer Cunningham Brennan. It wasn't uncommon, Cunningham recalled, for Holub to be at an Ohio State football game watching the action on the field while listening to another game on the radio through earphones. So typical was the scenario that at a



Holub (back row, third from left) played on the Akron Buchtel High School softball team that won the city championship in 1940 (Photo courtesy Margery Holub).

party in honor of Holub's 60th birthday, Cunningham and some of the others present "put on a little act." In the skit, Holub is watching one game while listening to another on the radio, and "we're hugging his pretend wife," Cunningham continued, adding that she keeps talking to her husband, but her husband's response is, "Go away! Go away!"

Even outside of sports, the activities in which Holub is involved today are numerous and the pace nearly always frenetic.

"Jerry goes full speed ahead – from the time he gets up to the time he goes to bed – at anything he does," said Cunningham, adding that Holub even plays golf "very, very fast, like he does everything," including talking on the phone. Added Cunningham with a chuckle, "He'll say, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay, goodbye'" then hang up and,

presumably, move on to the next order of business.

Still he was never too busy to make time for others. "There's never a time when he's not willing to talk to a younger lawyer about a case and give advice," said Gertz. That same willingness to be available or lend an ear is also true when it comes to family members. "He's always taken the time to listen," recalled daughter Carol. "He's very good at finding time for everything."

With Holub, everything really does mean

everything. In addition to working from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m. each weekday and at least half a day virtually every Saturday morning, Holub somehow finds the time to serve on the boards of three local sports organizations: the Dapper Dan Club, the Touchdown Club and the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame.

On top of all that, he participates in a senior lawyers organization that first met nine years ago. The group wasn't active then, Holub recalled. It wasn't until the second year when Holub became chairman that things really took off. He planned a fall outing that year and it continues to this day as an annual event where the members get together for hot dogs, soda pop and beer. Any lawyer who has practiced for at least 30 years is eligible to attend. Of his continuing role in the group, Holub said, "I can't get out of that job."

Other regular activities related to his profession include serving as Chapter 13 trustee longer than anyone else in the country, appearing in bankruptcy court every Thursday and chairing the Bar

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-Jerry Holub

Association's fall golf outing for the past seven years. And, for the past three or four years, Holub has provided free legal

services to hospice-house residents and in-home recipients of hospice care. The services are provided on an as-needed basis and include crafting a durable power of attorney or a living will or assisting with estate planning.

On the sports front, Holub plays golf frequently, bowls on a league with son-in-law Jeff Curtis, watches (or listens to) Cleveland Indians baseball games and U.M. and O.S.U. football games, watches University of Akron basketball games as a 12-year season-ticket holder and attends monthly meetings of the Summit County Sports Lunch Group.

His golf game could be better, Holub admitted, noting that if he could change something in his life it would be to play golf better. He insisted that he has not done well in the sport this year. "I was pretty good last year," he recalled, "but I'm terrible this year."

Whatever his score, golf is a game Holub plays with determination, especially when it comes to recovering lost golf balls. Cunningham told of the time 30 years ago when he, Holub and some others had gone to Hilton Head, S.C., to play golf. Holub, said Cunningham, "cannot help but look for a golf ball" as he did that day back in 1969 dressed in his usual golfing attire of shorts and a shirt that, by the second day of the trip, lacked the color coordination of the outfits Holub's wife would put together for him. Left to his own design, Cunningham recalled, Holub might turn up on the course wearing a green shirt and orange pants.

The golf course at Hilton Head abutted a wooded area and what one might think would be the final resting place for errant golf balls. But not to Holub. He was bent on finding them. "He had an eye for

"He's always taken the time to listen. He's very good at finding time for everything."

-Carol Holub-Curtis, Daughter

looking for golf balls," Cunningham recalled. Even trudging through what some might consider to be adverse conditions – weeds and sharp briars – would not deter him from the quest. This day was no different. The results were noticeable, though not so much in terms of the number of balls retrieved but rather in the condition of Holub's legs.

When the two men went that afternoon to play another 18 holes, they met up with a pair of golfers, one of whom kept looking at Holub's legs, which were scratched "and all sort of bloody" from his knees to his ankles. "He couldn't help it," said Cunningham of the other golfer. "He said, 'Whatever happened to your legs?' I just roared laughing. That was the result of looking for golf balls."

Finding the balls was only the first

suffice.

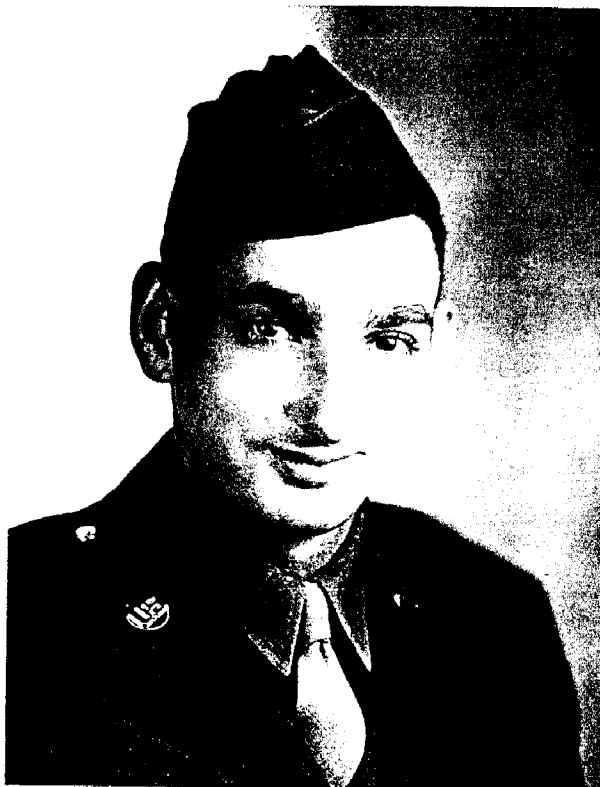
Cunningham related how after Holub, "an eternal optimist," dealt with at least one ball he found in the woods. Holub would take a driver or a wood and try to hit the ball through the trees, Cunningham said, adding that of course the ball could not get through. Stymied in his efforts, Holub would "slam his club down and yell, 'You nut!'"

Holub's bowling game, however, has shown no signs of falling off, with an average score of 170 to 175 at league games once a week over several months. "He's gotten better as he's gotten older," said son Alan. "The higher his age, the higher his score."

Then there are the activities that have nothing to do with either law or sports, but which Holub finds rewarding or simply enjoyable, including planning yet another of his high school reunions and hosting inductees to the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

Holub's involvement in planning reunions for the Buchtel High School Class of 1940 began when he organized the 20-year reunion in 1960. "I got the organization going," Holub recalled, adding that everyone knows he is the one who promotes the events. Since that first reunion, Holub has organized six others and is in the process of planning the class of 1940's 60th year reunion.

One activity Holub enjoys with his wife is hosting National Inventors Hall of Fame inductees. The task involves picking up the inductee from the airport and taking the person to his or her hotel, sitting with the person during the induction ceremony and providing any other assistance the person may need. The couple's participation as inductee hosts dates back to when the Hall of Fame began about five



*World War II found Holub in combat overseas in 1945
(Photo courtesy Margery Holub).*

years ago. During that time, said the Holubs, they have met many interesting people.

Holub's list of things to do did manage to get a tiny bit shorter this year when his tenure on the Bar Association's Judicial Commission ended. A charter member of the commission, Holub has for the past six or seven years been among a group of lawyers who review the credentials of judicial candidates, ask them questions and issue a report to area newspapers that rates each candidate as "acceptable," "not acceptable" or "highly regarded."

Holub stressed that the commission's work is not political and is intended to be a screening tool and a means of making recommendations to the voting public about each candidate's qualifications. Too many people are elected, said Holub, without regard to the person's qualifications. "You try to at least advise the public... because the public doesn't know these people."

Even with the commission off Holub's agenda, the list of activities and responsibilities is exhaustive – and perhaps exhausting – to anyone but Holub. Still it's enough to make even the most seasoned marathoner stop to catch his breath. He explained it matter-of-factly, saying, "I start early in the morning. If you've got things to do, you get them done." Margery Holub looks at it a little more philosophically. "He lives his life for now," she said, adding that her husband's philosophy is "you do it when you can. You never know where you will be [later]."

And do it he has. By his own reckoning, he never missed bowling or golf or work or a community meeting when he served as president of Temple Israel for two years. Nor for



For nearly 50 years, Holub has worked almost every Saturday (Photo courtesy Margerie Holub).

almost half a century has he missed work on Saturday morning more than once except for being ill or out of town.

It's unlikely that Holub would want to have it any other way. Being involved in activities and in the community is important to him and something he has tried to pass on to his children. "He always encouraged us to become involved" in youth organizations and other community activities, said Carol Holub-Curtis. "We got our work ethic from him." Of his father's emphasis on community involvement, Alan Holub recalled that both of his sisters were "community oriented" and that as he got older and participated in community activities, he found that he typically became the most active one in the group. "He exposed us to a lot in life," said Alan, adding that his father encouraged his children to pursue whatever goals they wanted in life. His father's attitude, said Alan, was to do

whatever you like and enjoy and see how far you can go with it.

The elder Holub has gone far – very far. He's done it by being what White described as a "tremendous organizer," or as Holub himself said, "I'm a good promoter." An uncanny ability to recall facts and figures and names and faces from recent years or days long past doesn't hurt either.

Holub told of the time when he and a friend were at Temple Israel one Friday night several years ago. Both were on the high school reunion committee at the time. Seated two or three rows in front of them was a woman who did not belong to the congregation. All that was visible was the back of the woman's head. Holub said to his friend, "See that girl there? She graduated high school with us." They later learned that Holub was indeed correct.

His memory for sports statistics and sports trivia also is unmatched. "He's a walking encyclopedia as far as [sports] statistics go – especially baseball," said Wein. Perhaps much of that knowledge comes from two books Holub has in his office, the *Encyclopedia of Baseball* and the *Encyclopedia of Football*. He reads them whenever he has a few spare minutes.

"Every once in a while, you have a little lull in the action, and you go through it. You can recall a lot of these people and things like that. Sports statistics always interested me. It isn't a matter of trying to memorize it. Some stuff just sticks to you."

Cunningham recalled how well it sticks to Holub. He told of the time he and some friends were asking who the four horsemen were when Holub chimed in with not only the names of the horse-



Jerry Holub with his dedicated staff: (left to right) Sharon Miner, Louise Honeycutt and Patty Gorges (Photo by Bruce Ford).

men but also the name of every lineman.

One might think that could have been just a lucky guess, but probably not. Alan Holub remembered the time when he was attending college in Denver. Every couple months or so the mail would bring a check from the *Akron Beacon Journal* for about \$25. It was the prize money the elder Holub had won for having answered correctly the paper's sports trivia question of the week. Instead of keeping the money for himself, Alan explained, his father had the paper send the checks to his son. "That pretty much put me through college," Alan quipped.

The elder Holub had this assessment of his recall ability: "I always said, if I could remember the law like I remember sports statistics, I'd been on the Supreme Court."

Maybe some day, but he insisted he has no aspirations for a judgeship of any kind. For now he seems content to treasure the honors he has received right here at home, including the William Schlemmer Award for Meritorious Service from the Akron Dapper Dan Club in February of this year and the Andy Palich Outstanding Athletic Service Memorial Award from the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame in 1983.

The Schlemmer Award honors a member of the Akron sports community whose dedication and contribution to local sports exemplifies the award's namesake, William D. Schlemmer, who worked in both the editorial and business divisions of the *Beacon Journal* for 34 years.

In presenting the award, the club cited Holub for having "set the standard for service to area sports groups." The award citation also noted Holub's service for many years on the boards of not only the Dapper Dan Club but also the Touchdown Club and the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame and for being the only person to have served as president of all three.

The Palich Award is a tribute to Andrew "Andy" Palich, a sports reporter for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer's* Akron bureau and a charter member of the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame

Committee. The award recognizes non-athletes for their work toward the betterment of sports in the Summit County area.

The award program cites Holub's long-standing involvement in area sports organizations, including charter membership in the Dapper Dan Club, service on that organization's executive board since 1959 and as its president in 1965. Also noted is Holub's co-founding of the Akron Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in 1971. As an award winner, Holub's name has been added to a permanent Roll of Honor displayed in the foyer of Akron University's Memorial Hall.

Both awards are a fitting tribute to a man who not only gives countless hours in support of local athletics but also takes the time to meet the needs of family, friends and colleagues and provides compassionate professional services to persons touched by bankruptcy. The competing commitments can mean long hours and nearly constant activity.

So one has to wonder, at the age of 76, will Holub ever want to retire – or at least slow down? Once again, the judgment is unanimous: Probably not. Gertz is even more emphatic. "I could never see Jerry retiring. Jerry is not the type of person who's going to sit at home and knit. I firmly believe that Jerry will practice law as long as he's physically and mentally capable of doing so – which will be forever."

Margery Holub and daughter Carol agree that Holub would not want to retire because, they say, "He wouldn't know what to do with himself."

Son Alan, while concurring with the consensus judgment, can envision one scenario that might prompt his father to trade work for retirement. "As long as the law league continues to have golf outings and things of that nature, I think he'll be all right. If they change that... they're going to lose him."

When – or if – Holub retires, it's not likely to be to a life of idleness. Said Holub, "You don't retire *from* something. You retire *to* something."

What that something might be, no one can predict, but as Cunningham said, "There's only one Jerry Holub."

HONORS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

William Schlemmer Award
Dapper Dan Club of Akron

Andy Palich Outstanding Athletic
Service Memorial Award
Summit County Sports Hall of Fame

Senior Lawyer Honorary Award
Akron Bar Association

Inductee
Akron Jewish Sports Hall of Fame

President
Summit County Sports
Hall of Fame

President
Dapper Dan Club of Akron

President
Touchdown Club
Of Greater Akron

President
Temple Israel

President
Hakoah Club

Chairman
City of Akron
Holocaust Memorial Committee

Chairman
Akron Bar Association
Judicial Referendum Committee

Named Scholarship
Ohio Northern University's Petit
College of Law