

# Attorney has strong legacy to follow

By M.B. DILLON  
STAFF WRITER

Dozens of well-wishers Friday attended a special session at the historic Livingston County Courthouse in downtown Howell with only a single motion on the docket — admission to the State Bar of Michigan of Robert J. Kull, 26, the newest attorney to join the Farmington Hills firm of Wood, Kull, Herchfus, Lay, & Kull.

What made the event so special is that the attorneys making the motion for his admittance were his father, David L. Kull of Brighton, and grandfather, David E. Kull of Farmington Hills.

From 1960-1985, Dave Kull Sr. practiced in Redford Township. His son joined him at the firm on Five Mile Road in 1973.

Dave Kull Sr., 88, graduated second in his law class from the University of Detroit, where for more than 20 years he held a record in the broadjump. This marks his 63rd year in the active practice of law.

David Kull Jr., 53, also graduated from the University of Detroit, first in the Class of 1968. Rob Kull graduated magna cum laude from the Detroit College of Law, second in his class.

Presiding at the ceremony in the turn-of-the-century courthouse was Livingston County Circuit Judge Daniel Burreas, accompanied by 53rd District Judges Frank Del Vero and Michael Hegarty; and retired 17th District Judge John Dillon of Redford.

Dave Kull Jr. welcomed the nearly full house, thanking the audience for being part of "a very proud day for my family."

He recalled that his father began practicing law in 1933. "Thirty-five years later, I came along. My son is speeding up the process, asking for admission a meager 28 years later."

David Kull Sr. said, "I ask, if it please the court, for admission of my grandson to the State Bar of Michigan. It's an honor for me to make this motion for my grandson. I can recommend this applicant for his knowledge of the

law. Since he graduated, I've had many conferences with him pertaining to various phases of law. He's impressed me with his knowledge, and the numerous awards he won while a student in law school.

"He is a man whose ethics, professionally and personally, are of the highest degree," said Kull; his wife of 61 years, Dorothy, listening in the front row. "I also would like to recognize him as a person who will take the oath of this court very seriously."

"He will defend the Constitution of Michigan and the United States vigorously, as well as the particular right of every individual to be represented by an attorney of competence whenever those rights are in jeopardy. This applicant recognizes that the practice of law is a profession and a privilege, not a business."

Judge Burreas invited members of the audience to speak. Congratulations were offered by attorney Ed Stanners and Judge Dillon, both of whom became associated with Dave Kull Sr. in

the 1950's; and Judge Del Vero, who promised to treat Rob Kull "the same way I treat your father."

Said Judge Dillon: "Rob, it's a good thing you took after your mother."

Rob Kull also was congratulated by Judge Hegarty; his wife Laura Kull; and mother, Charlene Kull. The latter divulged that she was secretly convinced from the time Rob was a child that he'd one day be an excellent lawyer.

Rob Kull took the lawyer's oath administered by Judge Del Vero, and thanked everyone for coming, "especially my Grandpa. I'm glad he made it."

The senior Kull said he was glad he came, also. "Rob is very fortunate, because this is the first motion I won this year," he joked.

Dave and Charlene Kull received guests after the ceremony at their restored farmhouse in Brighton, an 1876-vintage Italianate villa that is on the National Register of Historic Homes.



Photo by SCOTT PYZA

Lawyer's oath: Robert Kull takes the lawyer's oath administered by 53rd District Judge Frank Del Vero as his grandfather, David Kull, looks on.

# Friends believe theirs is a dignified cause to die for

By WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Furthering the cause of assisted suicide was not the issue at a gathering Nov. 14, just how best to accomplish it.

About 40 people came to an organizational meeting of Merian's Friends at the Universalist Unitarian Church in Farmington Hills to discuss a ballot proposal that would make "death with dignity" legal in Michigan.

The group, named for an Ann Arbor woman who ended her life with the help of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, is working to get a ballot proposal before Michigan Voters in 1998.

State Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, hosted last week's meeting.

"I've decided that this is an issue I want to become involved with," Dolan said. "We're all going to die."

Dolan reviewed state legislative attempts at addressing the issue of assisted suicide but concluded that even though a majority of the public favors some form of assisted suicide, it will not likely come out of Lansing.

A bill that would allow a person who is terminal-

ly ill and mentally competent to receive the help of doctors in ending a painful life will not make it through the process, she said. And even though the U.S. Supreme Court will be taking up the issue next year, the outcome is unclear.

To that end, Merian's Friends are using the next six months to organize a petition drive to get the issue on the ballot. They will have six months to gather from 350,000-400,000 signatures beginning in May. The number will depend on whether a constitutional change is sought.

Dr. Ed Pierce, the group's chairman and a former state senator from Ann Arbor, said in the Netherlands, where the practice is legal, only 1.6 percent of dying people choose assisted suicide. Of those, 85 percent have cancer.

"One third of us will die of cancer," he said. "It can be a very painful way to die and most of those who choose to die would probably only have a week or less to live."

The ballot proposal would permit a physician to help a patient die. It would apply only to the terminally ill. Two physicians, including a family doctor, would determine if it were appropriate along with a psychiatrist, who would rule out reversible mental conditions, such as depression. And it would

provide a seven-day waiting period between the time of the request and the dispensing of the lethal prescription.

Pierce said the idea has not gotten support from physicians, even though surveys show that a majority of them favor the idea. The public favors assisted suicide by 65-70 percent with 10 percent undecided, he said.

But those groups opposing the measure will mount an expensive campaign to keep it off the ballot and keep it from passing if it is on the ballot.

"In Oregon, the one state in three where a referendum squeaked by, \$1 million was spent to pass it and \$3 million was spent by the opposition," Pierce said.

Dolan said a lot of handicapped people have been concerned that such a procedure would somehow intimidate them into an assisted death.

"This is about a personal choice, nothing that would be forced on anyone," Dolan said.

"This has not been a partisan issue at all," she said. "No one is coerced. There is a waiting period." Dolan said not being allowed to choose to die

with the help of a physician would be akin to a religious group being able to enforce its belief system as law.

Several of those attending had their own horror stories of family members who had suffered with a terminal illness.

One woman talked about how her mother was given as much pain medicine as could be prescribed without sending her into a coma.

"My mother was given oxygen but was still struggling to breathe and she was saying 'help me,' the woman said. "If I would have had a gun, I would have shot my mother."

Dolan said assisted suicide would help families handle that tragedy without "implicating" family members.

Robert Gardon, a member of the Farmington/Southfield chapter, said assisted suicide is better for family members as well.

"A planned death allows time for the family to say good bye," he said. "It is a compassionate way of handling it."

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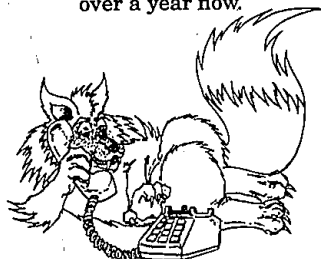
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Wednesday, November 27th (Thanksgiving Eve)

7:00 pm • Shain Park  
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