Imagine having been at Notre Dame when it enrolled its first freshman class of 1,000. Imagine listening to radio broadcasts of the 1924 Democratic Convention with professors and priests in one of the cornfields that surrounded the campus. Imagine being at Notre Dame for the legendary Notre Dame-Ohio State football game of 1935, which Notre Dame won, 18-13. Imagine having Knute Rockne as your track coach. And imagine being a member of the Law School class of 1931, the first to graduate from the present Law School building.

Now imagine having the opportunity to share the memories and stories you have of all these experiences at Notre Dame with Dean Patricia O'Hara, whose office is the same office that was your father’s, Thomas Konop, when he was Dean of the Law School from 1923 until 1941.

Mr. Konop is a gracious host who lives independently and who admits to enjoying a glass of wine every day. He clearly relished the opportunity to share his Notre Dame stories.

The majority of Mr. Konop’s legal career was spent at AT&T, beginning with work for Indiana Bell in Indianapolis. With a twinkle in his eye, he said he worked for 38 years and has been retired for 35 years: “I guess I’ve benefited from their retirement plan!”

Early in his career, he worked 44-hour weeks, including Saturday mornings, for $30 a week. When the mandatory Saturday time was dropped, his salary was cut by $2.50 a week.

Such is the experience of Kenneth Konop ’29, ’31 J.D., who is possibly the Law School’s oldest living alumnus. In many ways, Mr. Konop serves as a bridge between the past and the future of the law school, a bridge embodied by the present Law School building, designed and completed under the direction of Mr. Konop’s father, Law School Dean Thomas Konop.

On June 8, 2004, Dean Patricia O’Hara, Director of Law School Advancement Glenn Rosswurm, and Director of External Relations Carol Jambor-Smith traveled to Kansas City, Missouri, to meet, speak, and reminisce with Mr. Konop, a visit prompted by the congratulatory letter he sent to Dean O’Hara upon her appointment as the Law School’s ninth dean.

Because Dean Konop had had an illustrious political career before his academic career, Mr. Konop had wonderful stories to tell about the political events he remembered. Dean Konop won his 1910 congressional race by 10 votes, a victory that was certified by the Wisconsin Supreme Court. In part because his district included two Indian reservations, Dean Konop eventually became Chair of the Congressional Committee.
Mr. Konop’s days at Notre Dame, in many ways, seem far removed from 2004: buggies with runners were used for transportation; cornfields surrounded the campus; a round-trip train ride to a football game against Minnesota cost $14.25, including the price of a ticket.

on Indian Affairs and received occasional Washington, D.C. visits from members of the Oneida and Menomenee tribes, who would sleep on the living room floor of the Konops’ home.

The Congressman took his young five-year-old son to the White House to say goodbye to President Taft at the end of the President’s term. Mr. Konop remembers being lifted by Taft, a “huge man,” and placed in the big, black chair that sat behind the presidential desk.

While he was dean, Thomas Konop brought many changes to the Law School. During his tenure, the Law School was admitted to the American Association of Law Schools and accredited by the American Bar Association. He increased the academic requirements for admission to the Law School twice: in 1925, requiring a high school diploma plus two years of college work and in 1928, increasing the requirement to three years of college work. Under Dean Konop, the first issue of the *Lawyer* was published in 1925, the size of the faculty was increased, and the curriculum was expanded to include elective course work.

The most visible accomplishment of Dean Konop was the construction of the present Law School building, which was completed in 1930. Mr. Konop believes the building cost $400,000 and took one year to complete; he also remembers that an attorney from Fort Wayne, Indiana, provided the lead gift. Archbishop Patrick Joseph Cardinal Hayes of New York traveled to South Bend to participate in the building’s dedication.

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But the study and aspirations of those people echo in the same halls as the study and aspirations of today’s Law School faculty, staff, and students. The vision of Dean Konop for the Law School has carried through the intervening years to merge with the visions of Dean O’Hara for a new, larger Law School building that will meet today’s demands of a legal education.

We all look forward to greeting Mr. Konop on his 75th Reunion, which we are confident he will attend in 2006.