



The Honorable Eric Rosen '84

Alumni

Judge Eric Rosen is living the dream. On July 22, 2005, Governor Kathleen Sebelius appointed Rosen to the Kansas Supreme Court, a culmination

of his professional career. Rosen began his career as a social worker in the Topeka Public School system after receiving his B.S. and M.S. from the University of Kansas in social work. Rosen quickly became frustrated with the limitations of social workers and with the law. He had always dreamed of attending law school, so with encouragement from his friend Professor Nancy Maxwell, he decided to follow his dream. Rosen entered law school in January 1981. After graduation, Rosen held positions as Public Defender from 1983 to 1985; Assistant District Attorney from 1985 to 1988; Associate General Counsel for the Kansas Securities Commissioner from 1988 to 1990; Attorney in private practice from 1990 to 1993; and District Court Judge from 1993 to his recent appointment to the Kansas Supreme Court.

Rosen admitted the whole process and appointment has been humbling. He said, "During the nomination process, the appointment and the time since, it has given me time to reflect on my professional career and my education. I am so grateful for the excellent education I received from Washburn Law and of the flexibility the law school provided me as a non-traditional student." Rosen entered law school with his wife Libby, two sons, Paul age six and Jacob age four, and another baby on the way. He is grateful for the encouragement, help and understanding he received from his professors during his time in law school. "They really understood those of us who had families and provided help and encouragement along the way, for that I am forever grateful," claims Rosen.

A varied background and a reputation for being fair and unbiased is what Rosen brings to his current position and is what he will take to the Kansas Supreme Court. Governor Sebelius stated, "Judge Rosen has shown a commitment to fairness and a true respect for the law. I'm impressed with his sincerity, his compassion and his strong belief that we are all equal before the law. All Kansans will be proud to have him serving on our state's highest court." Rosen believes, "Due process is the key to freedom, I am proud of our justice system and honored to be part of it. I hope to carry on the rich tradition of the Kansas Supreme Court while also being unique to myself upon this appointment."

For several years from 1989 to 1994, Rosen was an Adjunct Professor at Washburn Law. He enjoyed every minute of teaching students. While teaching Trial Advocacy at the law school, Rosen was appointed as a District Court Judge. Rosen felt that his position as a District Court Judge created a conflict of interest teaching Trial Advocacy. "I felt it wasn't right for me to be teaching lawyers tricks of the trade in litigation as a judge, so I stepped down from teaching," said Rosen. "I encourage current Washburn Law students to get as much experience in the area of law they are interested in while in school. But more importantly, follow your dreams. Never be afraid or intimidated to follow those dreams and make them a reality," encourages Rosen.

Following dreams is what Rosen has done throughout his career and now his biggest dream has become a reality. "Being a District Court Judge, you see and hear everything. And when you think you have heard and seen it all, something new comes along. But I am always amazed at the resiliency of the human spirit that I see in my courtroom. The court system is the people's resolution, where they can address their issues then move on in their life. It is their day to be heard and receive closure. The case they bring before me is the most important case in that person's life. Therefore every case before me in the courtroom is critical and important," said Rosen. He believes the most important part of being a judge is to be open, fair and impartial and to allow everyone to be heard. To apply the law with a clear open mind on the facts before the court is critical to Rosen, and in his opinion, critical for any judge.

Rosen's most significant case was one which involved the city, county and corruption at the sheriff's office and ultimately led to the ouster of the Sheriff. "I had a lot of public pressure from various different groups and received many public comments. I had to focus solely on the facts before the court and apply the law to the circumstances. Even though you do this in every case, the cases which appear in the public eye create more pressure from surrounding groups and individuals. It was a very difficult case because my decision ultimately overturned many sentences of convicted felons. However, it was the right decision and the right thing to do. I have no regrets," states Rosen.

Rosen is humbled and honored to be selected to serve on Kansas's highest court. He doesn't like to talk about his accomplishments, he prefers to let his work do the talking for him. However, he wants to say, "Thank you. Thank you to the professors who were so accommodating, helpful and gave me encouragement in law school. And thank you to Washburn Law for providing me with an excellent education to be successful in my chosen field." Rosen's family is also very proud of his accomplishments, his wife Libby and their four sons: Paul and his wife Kari and daughter Lilana; Jacob and his wife Jaime and children Brooke and Carson; Mark; and Tom. "They all attended Governor Sebelius' press conference announcing my appointment. It was great to have them there. Carson even ran around all over, it was great," Rosen said with pride and a smile.