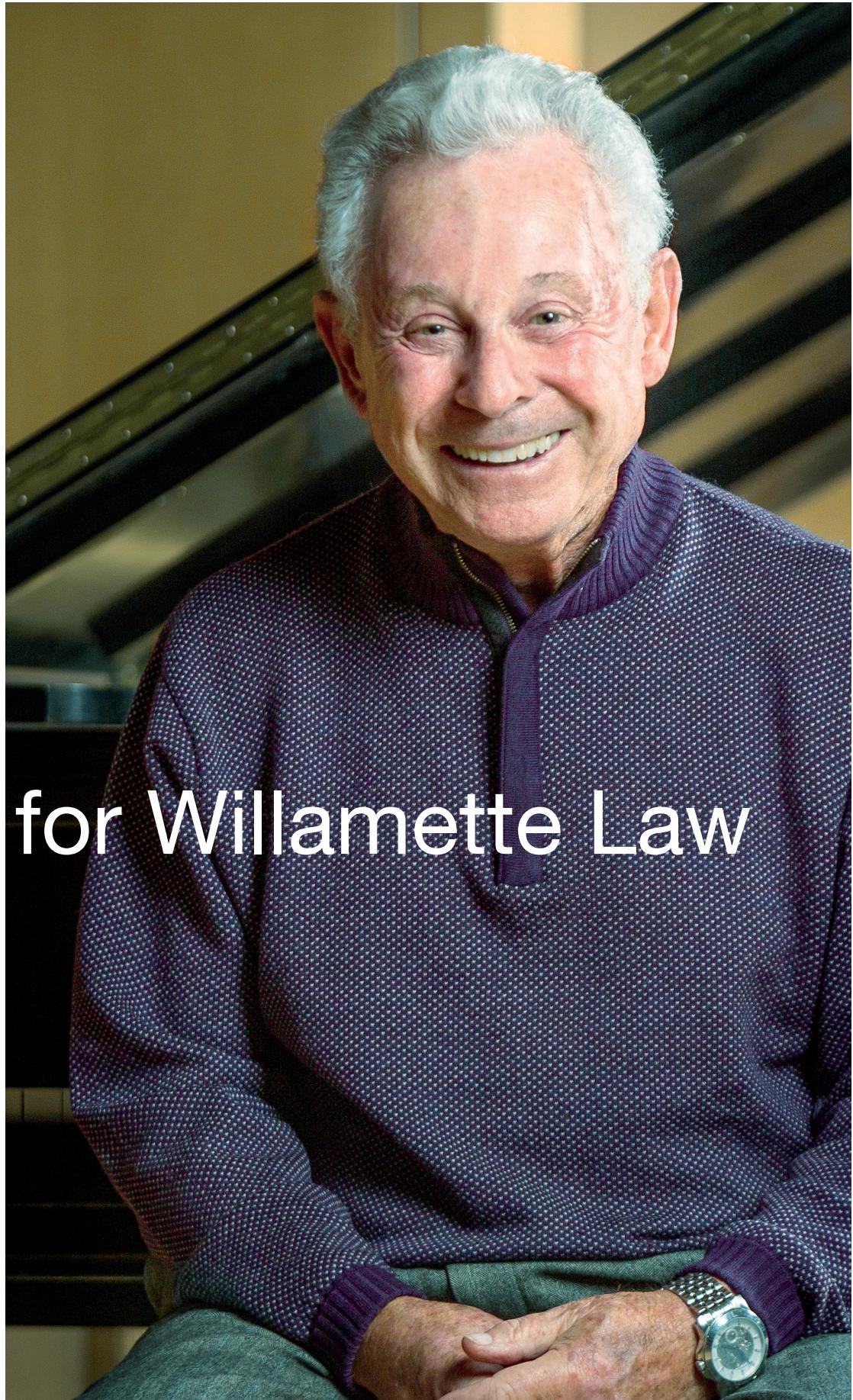
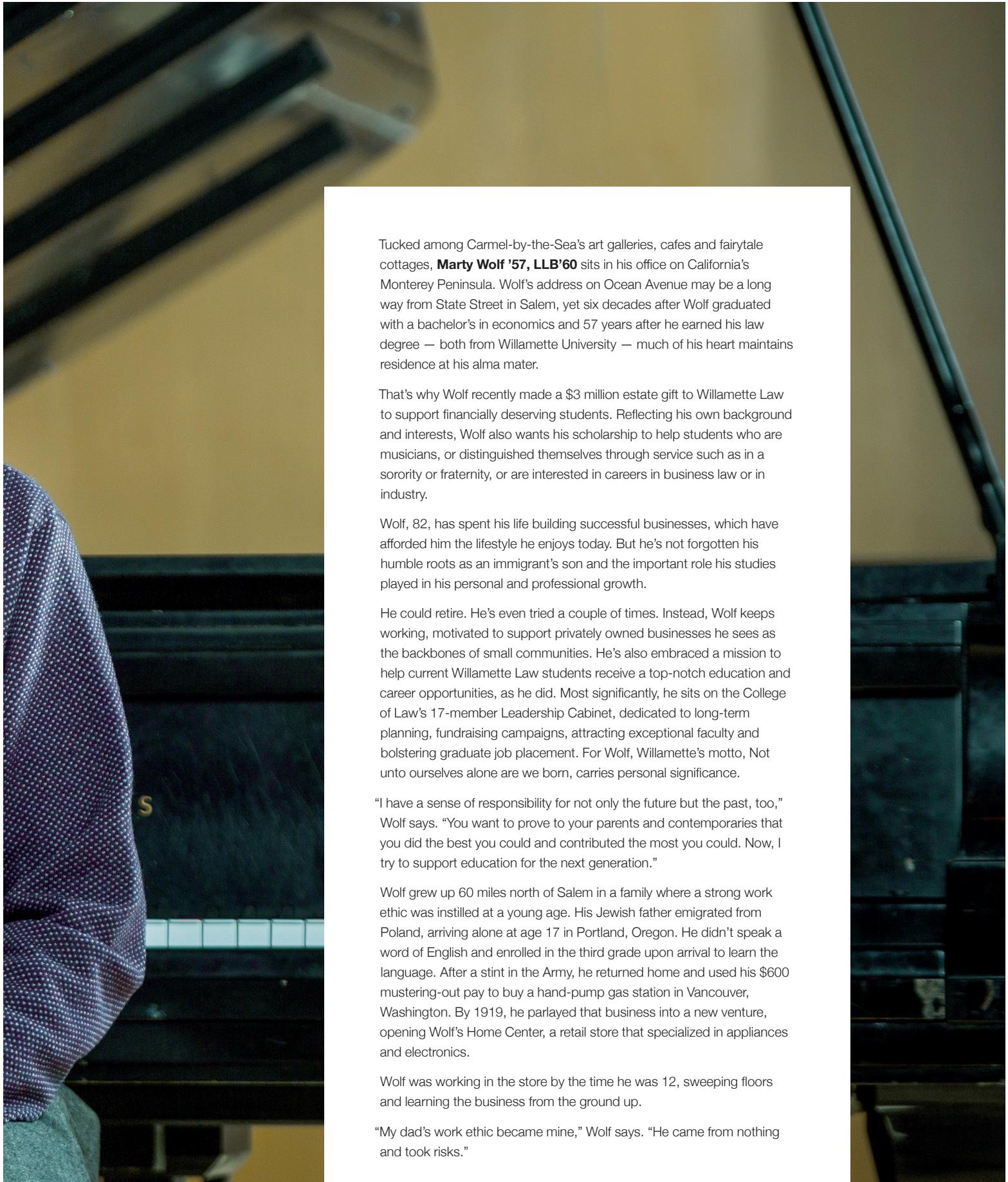


*Dual-degree alumnus Marty Wolf '57, LLB'60 leaned on his Willamette education to build a successful career in business. Now, through his ongoing support and a recent generous estate gift, he helps a new generation of law students prepare for the future*

# A Wolf for Willamette Law

By Christopher Tritto





Tucked among Carmel-by-the-Sea's art galleries, cafes and fairytale cottages, **Marty Wolf '57, LLB'60** sits in his office on California's Monterey Peninsula. Wolf's address on Ocean Avenue may be a long way from State Street in Salem, yet six decades after Wolf graduated with a bachelor's in economics and 57 years after he earned his law degree — both from Willamette University — much of his heart maintains residence at his alma mater.

That's why Wolf recently made a \$3 million estate gift to Willamette Law to support financially deserving students. Reflecting his own background and interests, Wolf also wants his scholarship to help students who are musicians, or distinguished themselves through service such as in a sorority or fraternity, or are interested in careers in business law or in industry.

Wolf, 82, has spent his life building successful businesses, which have afforded him the lifestyle he enjoys today. But he's not forgotten his humble roots as an immigrant's son and the important role his studies played in his personal and professional growth.

He could retire. He's even tried a couple of times. Instead, Wolf keeps working, motivated to support privately owned businesses he sees as the backbones of small communities. He's also embraced a mission to help current Willamette Law students receive a top-notch education and career opportunities, as he did. Most significantly, he sits on the College of Law's 17-member Leadership Cabinet, dedicated to long-term planning, fundraising campaigns, attracting exceptional faculty and bolstering graduate job placement. For Wolf, Willamette's motto, *Not unto ourselves alone are we born*, carries personal significance.

"I have a sense of responsibility for not only the future but the past, too," Wolf says. "You want to prove to your parents and contemporaries that you did the best you could and contributed the most you could. Now, I try to support education for the next generation."

Wolf grew up 60 miles north of Salem in a family where a strong work ethic was instilled at a young age. His Jewish father emigrated from Poland, arriving alone at age 17 in Portland, Oregon. He didn't speak a word of English and enrolled in the third grade upon arrival to learn the language. After a stint in the Army, he returned home and used his \$600 mustering-out pay to buy a hand-pump gas station in Vancouver, Washington. By 1919, he parlayed that business into a new venture, opening Wolf's Home Center, a retail store that specialized in appliances and electronics.

Wolf was working in the store by the time he was 12, sweeping floors and learning the business from the ground up.

"My dad's work ethic became mine," Wolf says. "He came from nothing and took risks."



During a moot court trial on Pre-Law Day at Willamette in April 1959, Marty Wolf '57, LLB'60 argued on defense before three Oregon Supreme Court justices. (Photo courtesy Statesman Journal)

**“Law school taught me discipline, the ability to reason and think and plan clearly, and the importance of negotiating from a position of strength. Those are all things you can apply later in life, not just in the practice of law.”**

—Marty Wolf '57, LLB'60

When it came time for college, Wolf considered the University of Washington but quickly realized he preferred the more intimate setting that Willamette offered. He majored in economics with a minor in political science, absorbing lessons from such professors as the late Mark Hatfield '43, the Willamette alumnus who would go on to serve two terms as Oregon's governor and 30 years in the U.S. Senate.

Wolf joined Beta Theta Pi fraternity, where he developed friendships that have lasted decades. He wrote the music for his class's performances in the annual Freshman Glee competition. And he nearly always worked two jobs to help pay his way through school, including playing piano in bands that performed in clubs and at sorority and fraternity dances on weekends.

“Marty was super talented as a musician,” recalls friend and fraternity brother **Doug Houser '57**, a member of the Willamette Board of Trustees. “His (Glee) music was great, but we couldn't sing or dance worth a darn and lost all four years.”

Wolf's love of music, fostered early on by his violinist mother, continues to this day. He plays piano frequently, sits in with bands in Carmel and is currently producing a CD of his original compositions as a gift to his

grandchildren, his wife, Francesca, and his many friends who have heard him play.

Despite his formative undergraduate experiences, Wolf again flirted with the University of Washington for graduate business school. But as before, he returned to Willamette. Persuaded by then-dean Seward Reese, Wolf enrolled in the College of Law.

Wolf was a standout, most notably as part of the three-person team that would shock much larger schools and bring Willamette its first National Moot Court Competition championship. The rigorous series of legal briefs and oral arguments culminated in a final round of presentations before U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart in New York City in December 1959. That performance with classmates **Ted Carlstrom JD'60** and **Richard Franzke '58, JD'60** brought prestige to the law school and opened doors for Wolf upon graduation in 1960.

He moved south and clerked for the California Supreme Court for a year. Then, after considering various job offers in Los Angeles in the field of entertainment law, Wolf joined a law firm back in Portland.

For all his success and aptitude for the field, however, Wolf found the practice of law wasn't a good fit. He left the firm in Portland after six months to take a fundraising and development job at Stanford University. By 1970, he found his way home to Vancouver to take control of the family business.

“My dad realized early on that he never wanted to work for anyone else,” Wolf says, “and I learned I didn't either.”

Over the next 15 years, he grew Wolf's Home Center and relocated the store across town to a new 36,000-square-foot location. Along the way, he formed a buying group to help companies like his increase their purchasing power with appliance, electronics and furniture manufacturers. By the time Wolf sold the family store in 1986,

he was ready to take his buying group to the next level. He associated himself with Winston-Salem, North Carolina-based Nationwide Marketing Group, which had no presence in the western United States, and founded the marketing consultancy and buying group Nationwide West.

Now headquartered in Kennewick, Washington, Nationwide West expanded and evolved under Wolf's leadership. Today, it helps some 250 independent retail clients across 17 states negotiate deals with manufacturers, produce TV commercials and marketing materials, merchandise their inventory, train their sales teams and work through succession planning. The company's clients represent nearly \$1 billion in annual retail sales. When he turned 70, Wolf sold Nationwide West to a partner and agreed to a three-year consulting contract with the firm. Wolf points out with a laugh that he's now entering his 12th year of that three-year contract.

Despite pursuing a career outside the field of law, Wolf credits his legal education at Willamette for much of his success in business.

"Law school taught me discipline, the ability to reason and think and plan clearly, and the importance of negotiating from a position of strength," Wolf says. "Those are all things you can apply later in life, not just in the practice of law. Many students go to law school not knowing what they want to do and not sure where they will end up. I tell them they can get so much education within school and more outside. Keep an open mind, both as to the practice of law and all the other opportunities available through your legal education."

Wolf continues to visit Willamette about six times a year. He connects with fellow alumni, visits his daughter and four grandchildren in Vancouver, speaks with current students and meets with his colleagues on the College of Law's Leadership Cabinet.

"He is the youngest 82-year-old guy I think I've ever met," says attorney **Marie Colmey JD'89**, a fellow Leadership Cabinet member. "He never stops. It's awesome and inspiring."

Colmey points to Wolf's unique blend of relationship-building skills, fundraising experience, business acumen and wit when describing his contributions to the advisory group.

"Many career opportunities today involve a mix of business and law," Colmey says. "Marty knows how that goes from his own career and experience. It's great to have his nontraditional perspective and to think about how we can prepare students for the real world."

Wolf hopes his contributions help the college continue its positive trajectory.

"There is something valuable in recognizing what you came from and how you can help others," Wolf says. "I want to see the College of Law continue to be successful."

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— Marie Colmey JD'89



From left: Richard Franzke '58, JD'60, Marty Wolf '57, LLB'60, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, and Ted Carlstrom JD'60 greet each other at the December 1959 National Moot Court Competition in New York City. (Photo courtesy Ted Carlstrom)