

## Advocacy Network and DMR Pay Tribute to Benjamin Ricci

Family, friends and colleagues of the late Benjamin Ricci gathered at the University of Massachusetts on March 26 to honor the man who did so much in his lifetime to improve the lives of persons with mental retardation.

“Remembering Ben” – co-hosted by Advocacy Network and the Department of Mental Retardation – was attended by some 200 guests in Memorial Hall, on the campus where Dr. Ricci instructed anatomy and physiology students for more than three decades.

The event included displays of photographs, news clippings and documents from Ben’s lifetime of contributions, and culminated with a slide show of memories.

Following a social hour of refreshments, Advocacy Network President Richard Gowen introduced about a dozen speakers who paid tribute to Ben as our inspirational leader, principal plaintiff of the landmark class action suit *Ricci v. Greenblatt*, UMass professor emeritus, retired U.S. Air Force colonel, distinguished author, neighbor, and friend.

### Everett Kosarick

Advocacy Network Board Member Everett Kosarick, one of 32 signatories of the original court complaint, recalled his long association with Ben, both at the University of Massachusetts, and then through the long court battle for the rights of the mentally retarded. Kosarick said, “Ben was a man of courage and fortitude . . . who was wont to say, ‘I’m here to comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable.’”

Kosarick credited Ben for coming to the aid of parents through development of the ISP (Individual Service Plan) and securing much-needed funding to improve living conditions for the mentally retarded.

### Mary McCarthy

Former DMR Commissioner Mary McCarthy



*“Anywhere that a parent needed an ally, Ben was there.”* – Former DMR Commissioner,  
Mary McCarthy

said, "To know Ben was to be challenged. He pushed, and he pushed, and he pushed. He made you react. He made you think. He was crystal clear on what he thought was right, and he gave you every opportunity to agree with him ... I often thought that he was the most charmingly impossible person I ever had to deal with.

"In addition to his trademark phrase, 'Keep the Faith,' he often used a few others with me, or perhaps, on me: 'Never give up and never give in.' 'Never apologize.' And my personal favorite, 'Trust. But verify.'

"Anywhere that a parent needed an ally," McCarthy said, "Ben was there."

## Commissioner Morrissey Announces Ricci Scholarship

During his remarks at the ceremony, DMR Commissioner Gerald Morrissey, one of Ben's former students, announced the establishment of a scholarship in Ben's name for a student in the developmental disabilities program at UMass.

Morrissey said, "As we salute Ben, I can't think of a better way to sustain his memory, his beliefs, his work, and what he did for many of us flannel-shirted, wide-eyed, bluejeaned UMass kids – a few Smithies, too, and some from The Mount – than an opportunity to start a career in the developmental disabilities field." Morrissey said the Benjamin Ricci scholarship, funded by DMR, will begin this fall.

### Michael Dukakis

Former Governor Michael Dukakis, a longtime supporter of Ben Ricci's efforts, could not attend the ceremony because of teaching commitments at UCLA, but sent the following written statement, which was read by Advocacy Network President Richard Gowen:

*I am sure I don't have to tell you that if we were not at UCLA for the winter quarter, we would be at Ben's memorial service.*

*One meets some very special people during the course of a long and busy political career. Ben was one of those special people. And he had that one ingredient that you need if you are going to make your mark as a citizen or a public official – tenacity. In my experience, only Fred Salvucci could match Ben on the tenacity index, and, interestingly enough, they were both Italian-Americans. Since the Greeks settled half of Italy in ancient times, I'd like to think they both had Greek blood coursing through their veins, and at least some of that tenacity came from my side of the Adriatic!*

*He had a lot of other things, too – intelligence; commitment; a huge social conscience; a refusal to take no for an answer. Those of us in public life like to think that we provide some leadership from time to time, but it wouldn't happen if we didn't have*

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*people like Ben advocating, pushing, insisting that we do our job.*

*I valued his friendship. I was grateful for his advocacy and unceasing commitment to what he believed. I hope we all will take inspiration from his life and his works – and keep the faith.*

*Mike Dukakis*

*March 20, 2006*

### **Joseph Tauro**

Also unable to attend, Judge Joseph Louis Tauro – who agreed to hear the *Ricci* case in 1972 – sent the following statement, read by President Gowen:

*Over the years, it has been my good fortune to have met many outstanding men. None has impressed me more than Ben Ricci.*

*Ben was a kind, compassionate and courageous person, dogged in his perseverance, but always respectful and fair in his advocacy. We could not have accomplished what we did without his leadership. I am proud to have worked with him.*

*Sincerely,*

*Joe Tauro*

*February 27, 2006*

### **Beryl Cohen**

Advocacy Network Attorney Beryl Cohen made the closing remarks, including excerpts from Ben's book, *Crimes Against Humanity*, about the horrific living conditions at Belchertown State School during the early 1970s, and a litany of conditions cited in the original *Ricci v. Greenblatt* court complaint filed on February 7, 1972.

Cohen credited Ben Ricci with eliminating these conditions through his persistence in litigation that lasted 21 years: "No Governor of Massachusetts, no Attorney General, no Senate President, no Speaker of the House, no legislative body in either the House or the Senate – can take credit, or share the credit, for what Ben Ricci and the United States District Court Judge Tauro accomplished."

Attorney Cohen also quoted remarks made in federal court by Judge Tauro on March 4, 1991: "I

think that all parties can agree that Ben Ricci started a historic case – one that has probably done more for the retarded in this Commonwealth, and perhaps in the country, than any other single event."

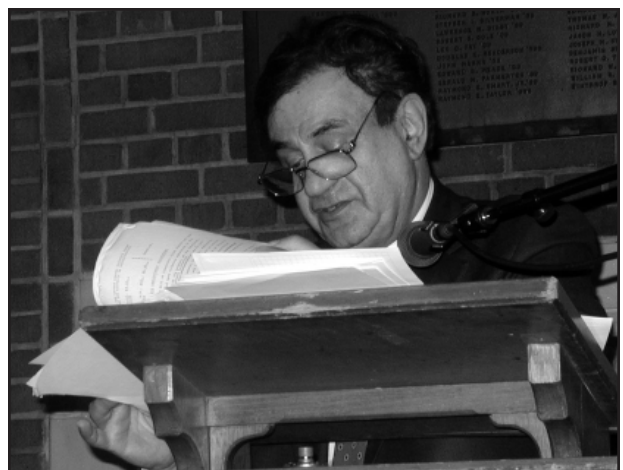
Cohen described Ben as "an optimist who was independent, courageous, relentless, dedicated, and persistent."

He added, "We affectionately remember his friendship, his sincerity, his loyalty, his warmth, his intelligence, his optimism. His single-minded dedication to improve the lives of retarded persons wherever they live. He was truly one of a kind, and will be missed wherever and whenever his friends and family gather.

"Ben Ricci sacrificed his own leisure and comfort for the benefit of thousands of disadvantaged and disabled citizens he never met. He elevated the role of citizen involvement and advocacy to an unprecedented level.

"As is true of most great men, Ben was not sufficiently honored during his lifetime . . . however, his legacy will live on during the lifetimes of 4,421 retarded persons in Massachusetts, who have been designated by the federal court as *Ricci* Class Members, who enjoy a court-ordered lifetime provision of humane services secured by the United States District Court of Massachusetts."

Attorney Cohen expressed the feelings of most of those in attendance when he said, "You meet a person such as Ben Ricci only once in your lifetime."



***"You meet a person such as Ben Ricci only once in your lifetime." – Attorney Beryl Cohen***

# Remembering Ben

Memorial Hall, University of Massachusetts  
March 26, 2006



Board member Erni Booth recalls her friendship with Ben Ricci, and their efforts together to improve the lives of residents at Belchertown State School. Erni's late husband Al was a plaintiff in the original lawsuit.



Erni Booth, Virginia Ricci and the Riccis' son Bob enjoy some social hour refreshments.



Advocacy Network Vice-President Donald Vitkus recounts squalid living conditions at the former Belchertown State School, where he once was a resident.

Sal Panzara, leader of the Monson Parents and Friends Association, relates some light-hearted stories about his longtime friendship with Ben Ricci and the late Bill Gauthier, former president of the Monson group.



Benjamin Ricci's

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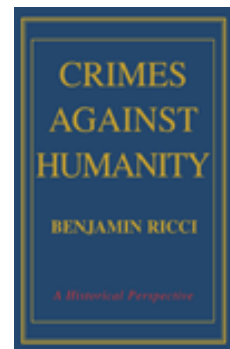
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# Judge Tauro Appoints Court Monitor

As a result of a very significant order issued by Judge Joseph Tauro in court on February 8, there was cause for celebration for Advocacy Network and other parent advocate groups who continue to be involved in the *Ricci* case. The courtroom at the Joseph Moakley federal court in Boston was packed with about 150 people, with several standing, even after extra chairs had been brought in for the overflow crowd.

Immediately after entering the courtroom and welcoming attendees, Judge Tauro announced that he had appointed a court monitor, U.S. Attorney Michael J. Sullivan, "... to advise the Court whether DMR has complied with federal law, state regulations, as well as the orders of this court. Mr. Sullivan is to have access to all records of the Department of Mental Retardation that may be of relevance to this inquiry." Judge Tauro added, "Pending his [Court Monitor Sullivan's] report, all transfers from Fernald and other DMR institutions will be discontinued ... There is no timetable. We're not in a hurry. What we want to do is get it right."

Judge Tauro had prefaced his announcement by saying he had read the reports submitted prior to the scheduled hearing and concluded, "It is clear that there are fundamental factual and legal disputes that

need to be resolved." He said, "We've been doing this for 30 years. I need assistance in examining and resolving these issues."

Then he made the sudden, dramatic announcement to appoint a U.S. attorney to monitor the case, an announcement applauded by parents, relatives, and friends of the mentally retarded who are represented in the *Ricci* case by Attorney Beryl Cohen. Commissioner Morrissey was red-faced as he listened to the announcement. The judge said he didn't even want to hear any arguments from either side that morning. The session was over within minutes.

Outside the courtroom after the session, Attorney Cohen said "We should all enjoy this moment. This is cause for celebration." Cohen said it's significant that the Judge ordered no time limit for the stoppage of transfers.

Six members of Advocacy Network's Board of Directors were in attendance, and we continue to monitor the progress of the class action.

Prior to the court session, several Fernald supporters stood outside, holding signs in praise of Judge Tauro for his decisions.

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***"There is no timetable. We're not in a hurry. What we want to do is get it right." – Judge Joseph Tauro***

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**Family advocates and Fernald employees demonstrate their support for Judge Tauro's compassion outside the Moakley Courthouse in Boston.**

# *Advocacy Network's* Honor Roll of Donors

*Advocacy Network* could not continue to function without your financial support. We are an all-volunteer organization, funded by the dues and donations of individuals who care about the well-being of the mentally retarded. Our Board of Directors thanks both the people listed below, and those many others who wish to remain anonymous, for their generous donations.

On behalf of all those who suffer from mental retardation, ***thank you all for your generosity!***

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# Congratulations to Our Lucky Valentine's Day Raffle Winners!



Many thanks to all of you who participated in our second annual Valentine's Day Raffle. The following winners are enjoying their prizes:

**1st Prize \$200:**

H. Raymond Stiles, Southfield MA

**2nd Prize \$100:**

Lauren Wolff, Feeding Hills MA

**3rd Prize \$50:**

M. L. Stankiewicz, Spencer MA

**Autographed copies of Ben Ricci's  
*Crimes Against Humanity:***

Mary Redman, Tyngsboro MA

A. Paquette, Westfield MA

Jerome Bass, Springfield MA

Pete Campeau, Belchertown MA

Mike Bonafilia, West Springfield MA

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## Two Warner Events Planned for May

### Warner-Pine Grove Cemetery Memorial Day Ceremony

The annual Memorial Day ceremony (Friday, May 26, 3 p.m.) at the Warner Pine Grove Cemetery on the grounds of the former Belchertown State School will take on a different tone this year. Three major figures responsible for restoration of the cemetery, and who influenced the lives of those buried there, all themselves passed away during the last year.

Al Warner, a former resident of Belchertown State School, who worked tirelessly to restore the burial ground to a place of respect for his deceased friends, now himself lies in the cemetery bearing his name. Al passed away in January at the age of 92.

Advocacy Network leader Ben Ricci, a longtime friend and advocate for Al, also died in January, at the age of 82. Ben assisted Al in securing state funds to restore the cemetery to a site of dignity, including erection of a monument bearing the names of all the former Belchertown State School residents interred there, and individual granite markers.

And Father Robert F. Wagner, who was a regular speaker at the annual Memorial Day event, passed away in December at the age of 72. Father

Wagner founded the Bureau for Exceptional Children and Adults, commonly known as Jericho House in Holyoke, and was its longtime director.

All three of these remarkable men were present at last year's ceremony.

### Hulmes-Warner Field Opening Day

Officials of the Belchertown Little League and the Department of Mental Retardation are preparing a special ceremony for dedication of the new Hulmes-Warner Field in Belchertown. The field is named after Hulmes Transportation, the locally-based company that provides transportation services for DMR, and the late Al Warner, a former resident of Belchertown State School, who later served many years as Little League umpire in the Amherst area.

Al was a speaker at the groundbreaking a year ago, when League President Paul Anziano said the field would be a replica of Fenway Park in Boston, complete with a mini-"Green Monster" outfield wall.

Opening Day is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. Saturday, May 20, with special appearances by Carl Beane, Public Address Announcer at Fenway, and Boston Red Sox mascot, Wally the Green Monster.

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