



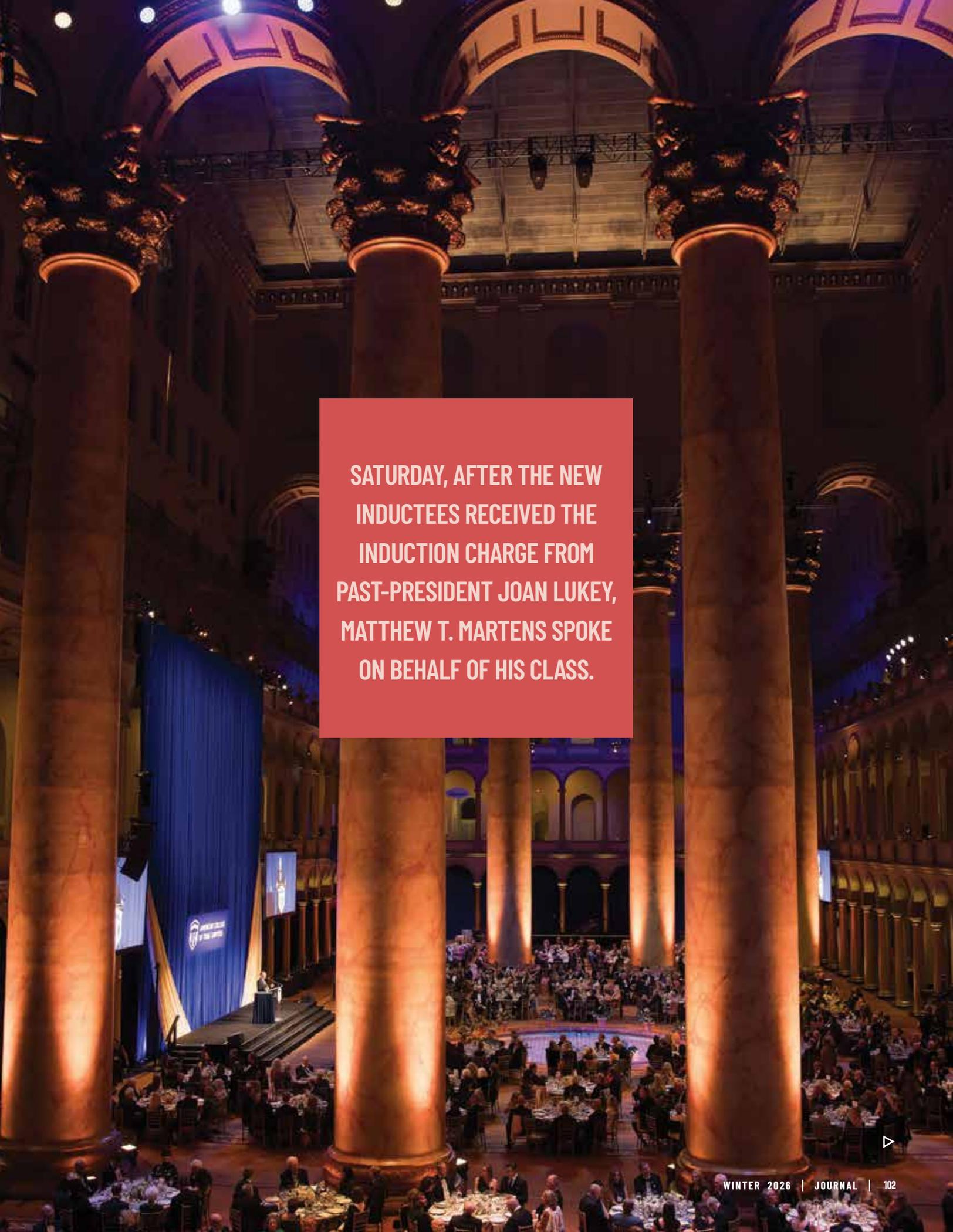
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THE COLLEGE
CELEBRATES
ITS 75TH
ANNIVERSARY





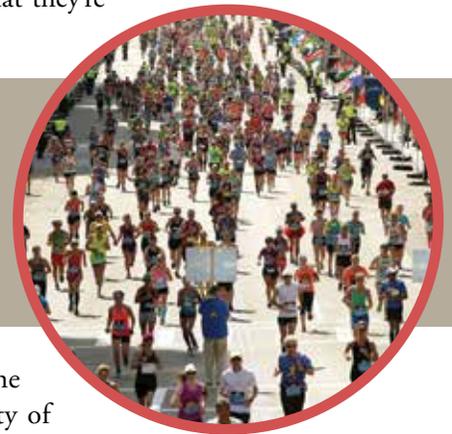
**SATURDAY, AFTER THE NEW
INDUCTEES RECEIVED THE
INDUCTION CHARGE FROM
PAST-PRESIDENT JOAN LUKEY,
MATTHEW T. MARTENS SPOKE
ON BEHALF OF HIS CLASS.**



“I was recently speaking with a client, an in-house litigator at a major corporation, about another attorney who is a member of the College. Without prompting, my client remarked that fellowship in the American College of Trial Lawyers is the one professional credential that assures him, as a client, that an attorney knows what they’re doing.

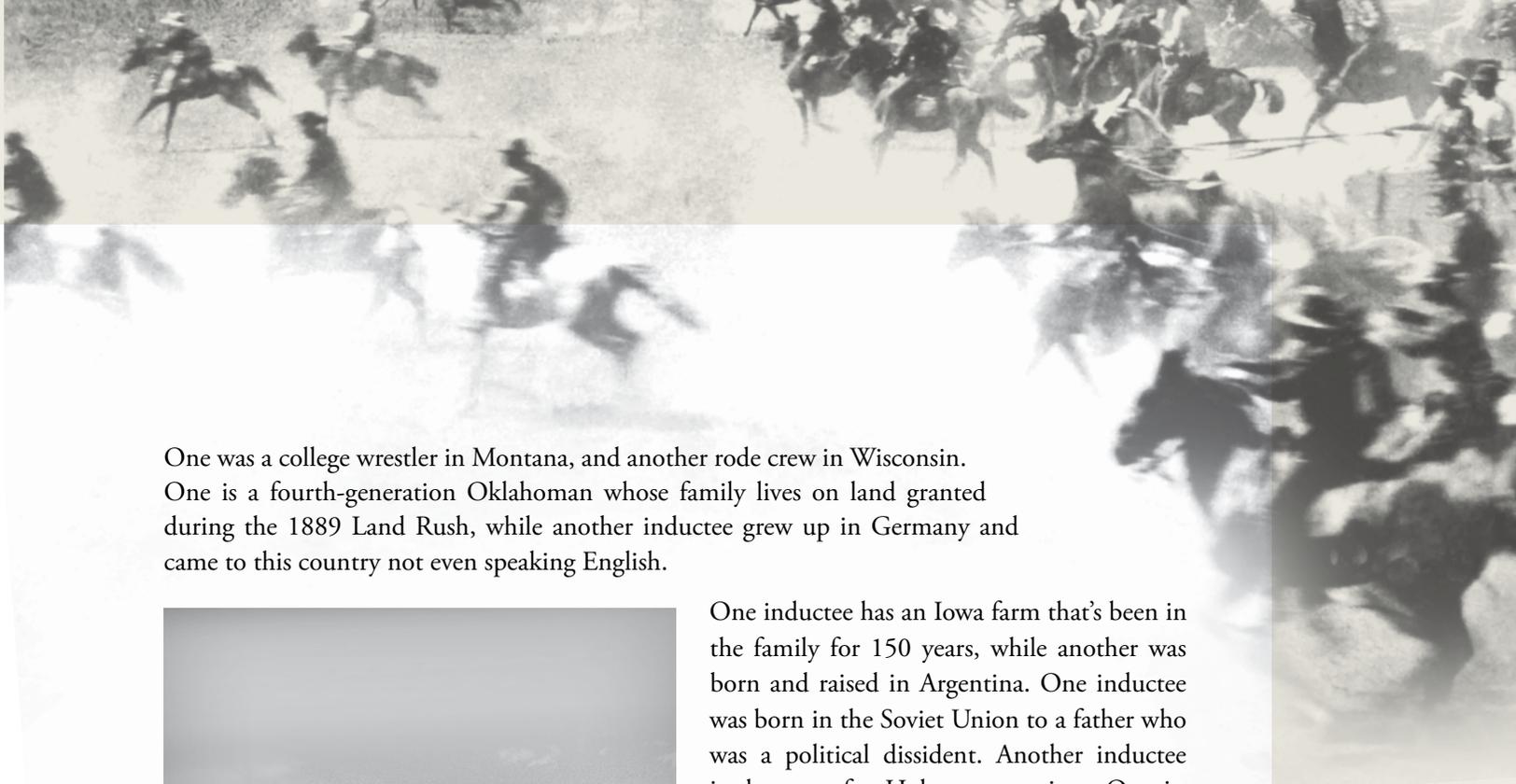
“That’s certainly been my experience over the years as well. Fellows in this college invariably know what they’re doing in and around the courtroom. So it’s a great honor for us as inductees to hear from this, a group of attorneys who knows what they’re doing, that you think we know what we’re doing, too.

“I’m pleased to report that this year’s class of inductees to the College are not only fine trial lawyers but also fascinating people. To offer a few examples, nine of our inductees have run marathons, one runs ultra-marathons, and one ran in the Boston Marathon the year of the bombing.



One inductee played college football. One was recruited for the University of Alabama water ski team. One played on a University of North Carolina soccer team that was ranked number One in the nation.





One was a college wrestler in Montana, and another rode crew in Wisconsin. One is a fourth-generation Oklahoman whose family lives on land granted during the 1889 Land Rush, while another inductee grew up in Germany and came to this country not even speaking English.



One inductee has an Iowa farm that's been in the family for 150 years, while another was born and raised in Argentina. One inductee was born in the Soviet Union to a father who was a political dissident. Another inductee is the son of a Holocaust survivor. One inductee co-founded a hemp company, though he swears that it's only used for fabric, paper, and twine. One of the inductees has designed three houses from scratch, while another inductee has competed in three Winter Olympics on the US Ski Team.

“Frankly, I feel downright boring compared to this group of people. We have inductees who were in remedial reading and math, who were the first in their family to go to college, who were the first in their family to go to law

school, or who were self-described middling law students, while other inductees were first in their law classes and second- and even fourth-generation lawyers.

“My story is some mix of that. My paternal grandparents came to this country from Nazi Germany in the early 20th century. I'm not aware of any lawyers in my family tree. I grew up in a very working-class part of New Jersey, and I literally didn't know any lawyers as a child. In fact, as I was thinking about it, I can't even recall ever meeting a lawyer until I was in law school. Throughout college, I was a miserably bad public speaker. My worst grade in college was freshman speech; and frankly, it was a generous grade. By my senior year, I tied my worst college grade in another class that depended on an oral presentation. I cringe, even today, thinking back on that event.

“I arrived at law school a year later, having graduated from a small liberal arts college in Ohio, wondering whether I even belonged in law school. But somewhere along the way, in law school, everything clicked for me. I don't know why, and I can't really remember how. Teenage me and even college me is as shocked as anyone that I now make a living trying cases and arguing appeals, much less that I would be asked to join and address the American College of Trial Lawyers this evening.



“Preparing to give this address this evening gave me reason to reflect on what it means to be a trial lawyer and, for me, what it means to be an American trial lawyer in 2025. Two things stood out. The first is that being a lawyer in the United States and in Canada means having a monopoly on access to legal justice. My neighbor can help me fix my car, whether or not he’s a trained mechanic. A friend at church can help me with my taxes, even if she’s not a licensed CPA. But if you have a legal problem, you can’t just call your smartest or most argumentative friend to represent you. That’s a crime, at least in many states, the unauthorized practice of law.

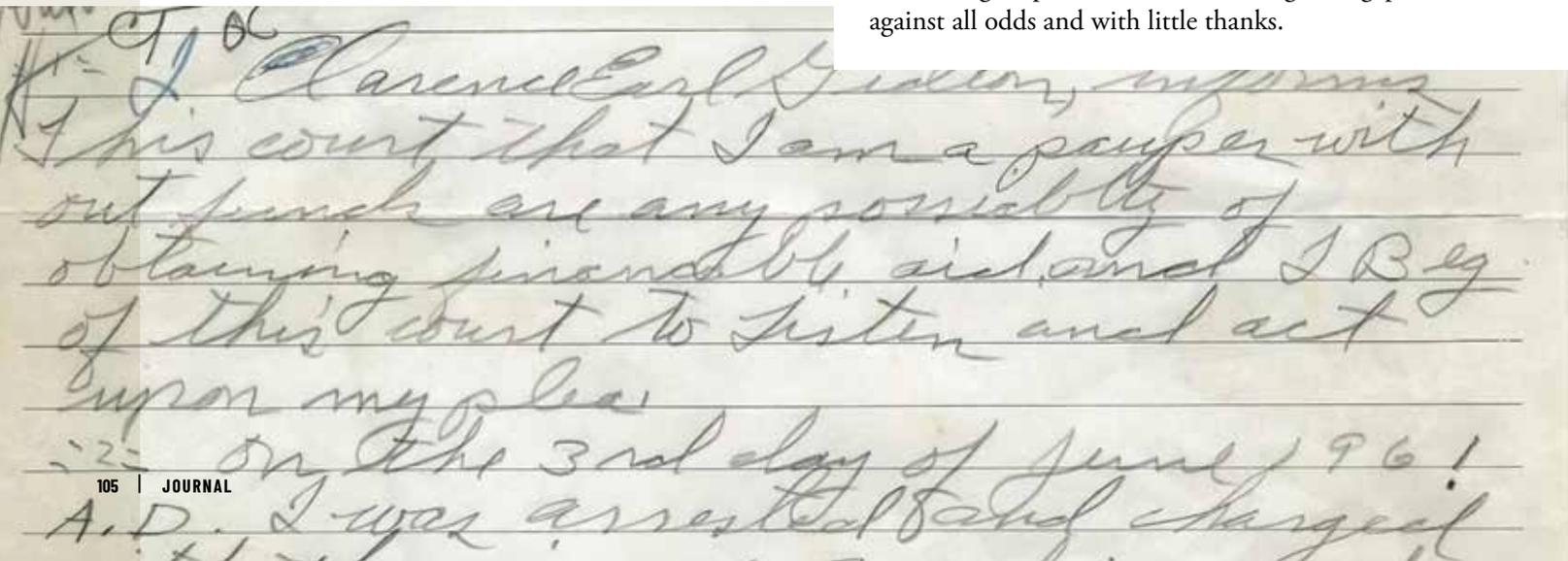
“We, as lawyers, have a monopoly on legal justice. Only lawyers can help with legal problems. Not everyone, however, can afford a lawyer. And so those who cannot afford a lawyer run the risk of being denied justice. Our monopoly can literally deny people their due. And so our monopoly carries with it responsibility. *Pro bono* legal work is not merely a training opportunity for young lawyers; it’s a moral obligation for even the most capable in our craft. The monopoly a law license affords comes with a duty, a duty to make sure that justice is not merely doled out for dollars but is available even to the destitute.

“Reading through the biographies of my fellow inductees, I was inspired by the various ways in which they have used their legal skills as the best in the bar to serve those who need but can’t always afford the best. Some have done this as prosecutors, spending decades protecting us all from those who would do us harm, providing some measure of justice, however imperfect in this life, to those who have suffered grievous wrong.



“One of our inductees won the first-ever civil jury verdict for a victim of sex tourism. Several of the inductees are medical malpractice attorneys, working to provide compensation to those who are harmed by those who should’ve healed. I met one inductee this morning whose practice specializes in birth injuries. As she put it, all her clients are babies.

“I was particularly struck by how many among these inductees have or are currently public defenders. It’s a national scandal that, now sixty-two years after *Gideon*, our nation still woefully underfunds basic criminal defense for the poor, who we seek to punish. I just want to say that I could not be more proud of nor thankful for those inductees and fellows who have dedicated their careers, or even portions of their careers, to working as public defenders, filling that gap against all odds and with little thanks.



“The second thing that stood out in my mind, as I thought about being a trial lawyer in 2025, is the role we play in resolving disputes. What distinguishes our liberal democratic forms of government from many other forms of governance over the course of history is that we resolve our disputes by persuasion and voting, rather than by brute force. Both in Canada and in the United States, we are not nations where might makes right.

“At a macro level, we resolve disputes through campaigns and elections. At a micro level, we resolve disputes through advocacy and jury deliberations. What we do as trial lawyers is help people vote on those disputes. Some of those disputes are of constitutional significance, involving first principles of our nations. Thomas Jefferson described the jury trial as, quote, the only anchor yet imagined by man by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution. Holding our governments to their constitution, then, falls to us.

“Prosecutors often refer to their obligation to carry out their duties without fear or favor. The same is true of us, in the private sector. But in this moment, there is a serious danger that we will instead cower in fear and seek to curry favor. Out of fear of attracting the government’s ire or in order to find favor with those in power, we can shy away from representing those most in need of our representation.

“I know a bit about this firsthand, being a partner in a law firm targeted this year with an executive order issued by a president who took issue with the clients my firm has chosen to represent on a pro bono basis. Suddenly, the college kid who was scared to stand in front of his freshman speech class had to decide whether to stand up to the President of the United States. What I can say, speaking especially to my fellow citizens, is that the most American thing we can do, as trial lawyers, is run to represent the people our government most hates.

“As Jefferson said, holding our government to its constitutional principles depends on us defending the most despised before a jury of their peers. I’m proud to say that my fellow inductees have proven themselves to be people willing to do just that, to stand up to the powerful. One of the inductees volunteered to represent Randy Weaver, a self-described white separatist, in his criminal prosecution over the standoff at Ruby Ridge. Another inductee is a renowned civil rights attorney representing the families of victims of police misconduct, like Alton Sterling and Walter Scott. One inductee is a federal prosecutor who has successfully prosecuted corrupt government officials and police misconduct cases. And yet another inductee has repeatedly stood up to big corporations, working on six different cases that caused companies to change the design or marketing of their products.

“And this is just a sample of the courage of these inductees, but courage is easier to muster when other people are with you, when other people have confidence in you. And so as inductees, we thank you, the Fellows of the College, for expressing your confidence in us, for telling us that you believe we know what we’re doing. We commit to do our best to live up to this organization’s reputation, and to carry on its legacy of excellence and courage. Thank you.”

Thank you, Matt.

