



Allan and Deborah Schneider

## Allan Schneider '53: A talent for analysis and a sister who read the want ads.

It was not easy to catch Allan Schneider at home for a phone conversation early this spring. He was busy volunteering with set construction for the Bloomington (Minnesota) Civic Theatre's production of *Damn Yankees*.

Schneider and his wife, Deborah, also happen to be key financial donors to the theater. A few years ago, their major gift led to the creation of the Bloomington Center for the Arts. "We always felt that when things were going very well for us, we wanted to give something back to Bloomington," Allan says.

The contribution exemplifies the Schneiders' philosophy of giving generously wherever they are needed. They are also longtime donors to the UW Law School, where Allan received his degree in 1953. Debby, who earned her undergraduate degree from the UW the same year, is a steady donor to the UW-Madison Integrated Liberal Studies program.

"We do try to make an annual contribution," Allan says. "It's a way of saying thanks to the school for having been wonderful for us, and we keep seeing how they're doing wonderful things for others, too." Allan Schneider grew up in Superior, Wisconsin, when money was hard to come by. He started working at age

fifteen with a paper route.

As an undergraduate at UW-Madison, he majored in business administration and

accounting. He found that he did not enjoy accounting, but he received an A in business law. Reluctantly, he took his father's advice and applied to law school.

"I found I just loved it," he recalls. "I could hardly wait to brief my cases and analyze them." His grades were excellent, and he was chosen for *Law Review*. After graduation, he practiced in Minneapolis for about a year, but his low salary did not pay the bills.

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As it turned out, that seemingly unfortunate situation was a fortunate one. His sister, steadily reading the Twin Cities want ads on his behalf, spotted an advertisement for a company seeking lawyers who were good at analyzing cases. The employer was West Publishing Company in St. Paul.

"The editor there was very impressed with my record," Schneider remembers. "The UW had a very good reputation — even back then — and I easily passed the Minnesota bar exam, thanks to my good education at the university."

His starting salary was an impressive \$375 a month. "They were anxious to get me," he says, "and it turned out to be a type of

work I really enjoyed. As they say, the rest is history. I worked there forty-one years."

At West, Schneider excelled at the work that required the most analytical ability: classification. He had exceptional skill in analyzing a point of law and putting it in the right category in the West's Digest system. His work was valued by the editor-in-chief, and his salary rose accordingly. Another contribution to his improving financial situation was West's policy of giving key employees the opportunity to buy stock in the company. "That's how I really benefitted," he says.

The returns from that investment have found their way to several organizations that the Schneiders want to thank, with the Law School high on the list.

Currently, the Schneiders are technically retired. Their days are filled with multiple projects, and their two children and three grandchildren live close by: son David is a physician, and daughter Elaine is an attorney in private practice, specializing in immigration law. She has been honored by the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights for contributing 2,000 hours of pro bono work. The ethic of giving back clearly runs in the family.

Allan considers his annual contribution to the Law School to be a natural return. "My tuition was \$150 a year. When you think of what that enabled me to earn, it reminds me of the credit-card ad: 'Some things are priceless.' That's what we feel about our education, about having gone to a wonderful university."