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UMass alumnus Robert G. Judge follows in family footsteps

Robert G. Judge was inspired to attend UMass-Amherst partly by family connections to the university: His grandmother, Amy S. Judge, served as the head of residence at Knowlton House in the 1950s and 1960s.

Judge, who grew up in South Hadley, graduated from UMass-Amherst in 1974, after spending his senior year as an exchange student at Keele University in England. He then taught high school social studies for one year at a private American high school in Great Yarmouth, on England's east coast. Judge returned to Massachusetts the following year and, by 1976, was back at UMass. He intended to pursue a career in education, but shifted to the graduate program in public administration.

"Despite the then-inexpensive tuition," Judge said, "the money ran out before I could complete my master's degree." So he took a job working for the city of Hartford in personnel administration. He eventually moved into the private sector and remained there until 2003, when he was ready to make a career change.

Judge has always been involved in politics. He helped organize George McGovern's presidential campaign at UMass in 1972, and was involved in several other campaigns over the years. "In 2003, politics called me again," he said. "I had worked on the campaign of John Scibak, who was elected as a state representative in 2002 for the Second Hampshire District, which consists of Easthampton, Hadley and South Hadley. A freshman state representative gets one staffer, and when John asked me to be his legislative aide, I jumped at the chance."

Judge's primary responsibility is constituent service, helping residents of the Second Hampshire District deal with the labyrinth of state government. "Many of Representative Scibak's constituents work at UMass-Amherst, so I retain my connection to the campus, as I'm regularly communicating to Representative Scibak the issues his constituents want brought to his attention, which fortunately are of high interest to him," he said.

Earlier this year, Judge continued a nearly 100-year-old family tradition - both his great-grandfather, Martin J. Judge, and grandfather, Gerald A. Judge, served as selectmen in South Hadley, elected in 1910 and 1935, respectively - by becoming even more involved in local politics. "I decided to follow their example, and ran successfully for the selectboard this past April," he said. "I enjoy my local government work just as I do the work on the state level. The jobs have similarities, because although I vote on issues before the selectboard, of course, I also spend time helping residents in South Hadley get in touch with town officials who can help them with their concerns."

Judge has fond memories of UMass-Amherst. "I lived in Butterfield dorm for two years - the first co-ed dorm on campus - for which we got a lot of attention." He said he remembers inspirational professors, great classmates and invigorating walks from one side of campus to the other. "During some of my personnel work in the 1980s, I did on-campus recruiting of engineering seniors, and it gave me great pleasure to be back there again," Judge said. "I got a good education at UMass-Amherst," he added. "And I still want to get that master's degree, but I've already gotten more from UMass-Amherst than I can ever count."

Prepared by the UMass Amherst Alumni Association. For more information go to UMassAlumni.com.