

NEVADA TRAILBLAZERS

Meet John “Squire” Drendel:

True Trailblazer Believed in Helping the Little Guy

BY MARY BACON, ESQ.

John “Squire” Drendel was a true trailblazer. His son, Tom Drendel, summarized his father perfectly.

“His approach was simple, and he lived and preached it: Give the little guy some help when you can,” Tom Drendel said. “Always do the right thing. You can’t listen yourself into trouble, especially in the courtroom. Your word is your bond. Always treat your clients, your opponents, and the judiciary with respect, even when it is painful to do so. Don’t waste the court or the jurors’ time. Treat court staff like family. Always be honest. He was a perfect gentleman. And he worked extremely hard.”

John “Squire” Drendel was born in 1923 in Carson Valley. He grew up poor during the Great Depression. Dinner was often the fish and game he harvested with his father and brother. He attended elementary school in a one-

room schoolhouse, and eventually matriculated to Douglas County High School, becoming student body president.

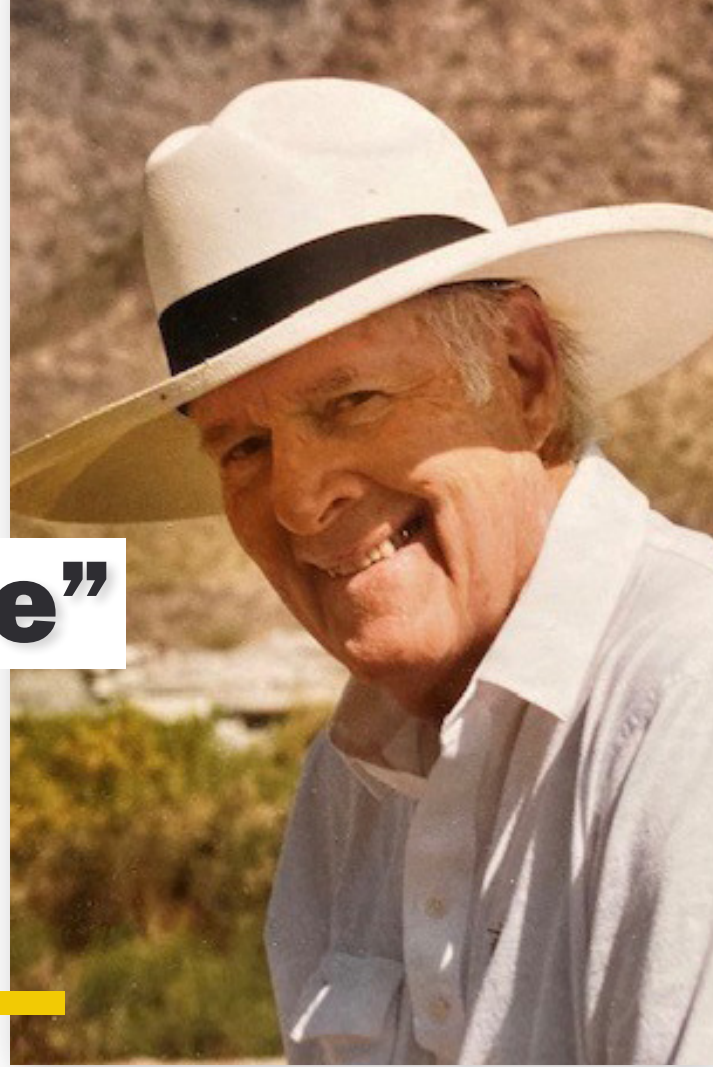
Despite his circumstances, Drendel’s attitude was full of optimism and gratitude. After graduating high school, he earned admission to Notre Dame – an impressive feat for anyone – let alone for a small-town boy who spent his days outside, hunting and fishing. The community rallied behind him to help fund his education, a kindness that he never forgot and vowed to pay forward.

“My father always understood that his success was a Minden accomplishment as much as it was his,” Tom Drendel said. “The state of Nevada and the community leaders believed in him and helped finance his education. Without the kindness and generosity of others, my father’s legacy wouldn’t be possible.”

The world changed during Drendel’s first year of college. Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and priorities shifted as the U.S. entered World War II. Less than a year later, he was in basic training before being sent into the Pacific Theater for operations in Iwo Jima and Okinawa, Japan.

After the war ended and with the help of the GI Bill, Drendel was fortunate enough to be able to follow his dream – attending law school.

Drendel attended the University of Colorado before returning to northern Nevada to raise a family. As an attorney, he partnered with William Bradley to open a personal injury firm. His verdicts and accolades were



impressive. He won the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Nevada Trial Lawyers Association, was a Fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers, and was recognized by Best Lawyers in America for more than 30 years. His presence in the legal community and unimpeachable character were so well known that the “John ‘Squire’ Drendel Civility Award,” an award recognizing integrity, honesty, and civility, is now awarded by The Reno Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates.

Drendel’s work was also recognized outside of Nevada. Along with James Boccardo and Bud Bradley, he once had the biggest plaintiff’s verdict in the country – more than \$3 million in *Bush v. General Electric Co.*, 88 Nev. 360 (1968) – a case relating to defective products that Nevada lawyers still rely on today. He was consistently recognized for his commitment and advocacy for civil rights beginning in the 1960s and continuing throughout his life.

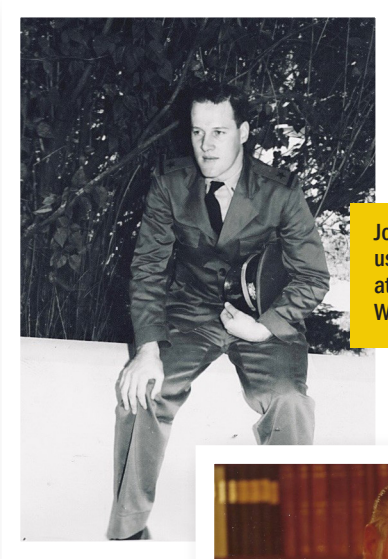
At the age of 100, Drendel passed, surrounded by family. And while he is no longer with us, his legacy is. His family continues to hear stories about the lives he touched. In one little known story, he helped get a group of nuns who were being held hostage in Cuba safe passage to the U.S. by contacting congress and raising funds through Reno casino owners. But his kindness and generosity extended to everyone, no matter their beliefs or station in life. Drendel’s uniquely Nevadan spirit and decades of service to his country and community defines what it means to be a trailblazer.



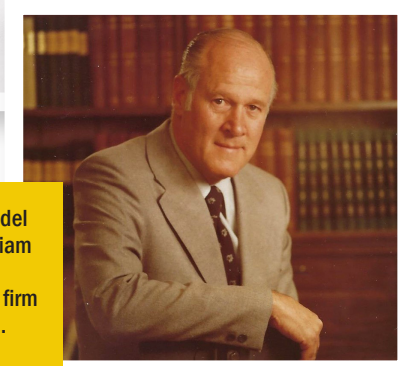
John “Squire” Drendel was a World War II veteran, serving in the Pacific Theater.



John “Squire” Drendel during his days serving in the U.S. Navy.



John “Squire” Drendel used the G.I. Bill to attend law school after World War II.



John “Squire” Drendel partnered with William Bradley to open a personal injury law firm in northern Nevada.



John “Squire” Drendel enjoyed spending time on his property in northern Nevada. He passed away on February 15, 2024.