

RWU salutes Tiverton's Durfee with Honorary Degree

Hailed as "trail blazing lawyer," champion of the environment.



In "hooding ceremony" President Roy J. Nirschel (right) assists board member Roscoe C. Howard, Jr. adjust Louise Durfee's academic sash.

[By Tom Killin Dalglish](#)

TIVERTON — Louise Durfee, 78, who for decades has been a leader both in Tiverton and the state, learned last fall that Roger William University had voted to award her an honorary Doctor of Laws degree at law school commencement.

Last week the day before Friday's ceremonies, Ms Durfee recalled her surprise when notified last fall. "Oh my God, when I heard of this I was truly stunned. You don't think of things of that sort," she said.

The framed citation presented to Ms. Durfee called her "a trail blazing lawyer and an early champion of legal protection for

the environment in Rhode Island."

University President Roy J. Nirschel, Ph.D., when conferring the degree on Ms. Durfee in front of the law school graduates and their families, said to Ms. Durfee, "Your groundbreaking legal career and your dedication to protecting Rhode Island's natural resources are an inspiration to us all, and we are honored to award you this Doctor of Laws, honoris causa."

Ms. Durfee is a past president of Save The Bay and chaired the task force that, in 1980, recommended the creation of the Narragansett Bay Commission. She has been active with the

Audubon Society of Rhode Island since 1970, when she joined its Board of Directors, and she still serves on its Council of Advisors. She has also served as chairwoman of the Rhode Island Conservation Law Foundation, and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC) from 1997-2004. From 1991 to 1994, Ms. Durfee was the director of the Department of Environmental Management.

Locally, Ms. Durfee has served on the Tiverton Town Council for 19 years including at least two terms as president. She has been a member of the Tiverton zoning board of review, and is a member of the advisory committee for the Tiverton Land Trust.

As a lawyer, Ms. Durfee has practiced and been a partner with the Providence law firms of Tillinghast, Collins & Graham and Brown, Rudnick, LLP. She was the first woman ever appointed to Rhode Island's Board of Bar Examiners, and has served on the state's Advisory Committee on Judicial Appointments and the Committee on the Treatment of Women in the Courts. She is a graduate of Connecticut College and Yale Law School.