

## At 67, Gains Entry to R.I. Bar

by Bob Riel  
Call Staff Writer

**W**ith his recent admittance to the Rhode Island Bar Association, J. Gaston Levitre has realized a longtime dream.

"I am excited and overjoyed," says Levitre, bubbling with emotion. "It feels like you're walking out of a room, and there's your whole life in front of you. You'll never be what you were before."

The words ring true for anyone who has graduated from law school and passed the bar examination. But, in this case, they mean even more.

That's because Levitre, of Brookside Drive, North Smithfield, is 67 years old.

Rather than settling down and enjoying retirement like most people his age, Levitre decided several years ago to embark on a new career.

"I'll never retire," he says emphatically. "My retirement is going to be the practice of law."

For the last five years, he has attended the University of Bridgeport Law School. Three nights a week, Levitre made the long trip to Connecticut for classes.

At times, he said, he was so tired he would stop the car and sleep at a rest area. A miniature alarm clock would awaken him after a few hours so he could continue the drive home.

"When I first started, people would say, 'You're crazy,' or 'You'll never make it,'" Levitre recalls. "But I didn't go because I wanted to prove them wrong. I went because I wanted to. If you want it badly enough, you've got to do it."

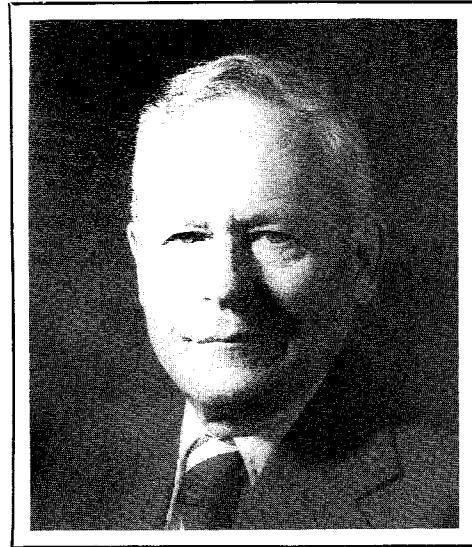
Remembering the miles he drove, the classes he attended, and the hours he spent at libraries, Levitre says he was just "too stubborn to give up."

"I hope that's the attitude I always have. I believe the only object that defeats everyone is their own mind. Impossibility has never been a companion of mine. If you have the right mental attitude, you can do it," he said.

The oldest of 10 children, Levitre began working in a mill when he was 14 years old, during the midst of the Great Depression. His mother died when he was four, and his stepmother passed away when he was 13, so he had to work to help support his family.

But Levitre said he "always yearned for additional learning and education."

So, while he worked 29 years with Ramshorn Mills, Inc. of Millbury, Mass., he obtained his high school



J. Gaston Levitre

equivalency from LaSalle University's extension program and an associate's degree from Roger Williams Junior College in Providence.

After spending five years, from 1963 to 1968, in Colorado as plant manager of the Rocky Ford Wool Company, Levitre returned to Rhode Island and went back to school. In 1970, he received a bachelor of arts degree from Roger Williams College.

He worked in real estate for several years before deciding to apply for admission to law school. While in school, he worked as a law clerk with the Soucy and Theriault firm of Woonsocket.

All the work culminated Saturday morning in Supreme Court, Providence, when Levitre was officially inducted into the bar association.

"I'm so excited over it. I'm just trying to unwind," he said.

Besides his constant schedule of classes during the past three decades, Levitre has found the time to work with the Dale Carnegie Institute, was a founding member of the North Smithfield Ambulance and Rescue Association, and served as president of the Rhode Island Beekeepers Association for five years.

He also organized the Eastern Apicultural Society, served on the Greater Woonsocket Board of Realtors, was past master of the Providence County Pomona and Primrose Granges, and was active in the Woonsocket Kiwanis Club.

He was also involved in politics for a time, running unsuccessfully for North Smithfield town administrator in 1979.

Through it all, Levitre says he has no regrets.

"If I had to do it over again, I'd do the same gosh darn thing. I enjoyed it that much," he said.