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IN MEMORIAM, JOSEPH H. KOFFLER

Richard Matasar
New York Law School

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JOSEPH H. KOFFLER
(1920–2006)

IN MEMORIAM, JOSEPH H. KOFFLER

(1920-2006)

A TRIBUTE BY RICHARD MATASAR*

As we celebrate the faculty at New York Law School today, I also want to take this opportunity to remember and honor one of the most respected faculty members of our past. Professor Joseph H. Koffler, a legend among the entire Law School community, passed away on November 13, 2006 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. Professor Koffler taught at New York Law School for more than 50 years, until he retired fully in 2003.

Before I started at New York Law School, Professor Koffler was one of the faculty members I kept hearing about. Staff, faculty, alumni, and students spoke with affection about "Joe" as a brilliant, unforgettable, and sometimes intimidating teacher. And I soon understood why. His relentless dedication to the study of law and to his students was an immediate and ongoing inspiration to me. To so many of us, he personifies all that is best at New York Law School: tough, demanding, and soft at the core. Throughout our years together here, I admired his commitment as he adapted to changes at the school and happily continued to challenge his students to reach their potential.

Joe came to New York Law School in 1950, two years after graduating from Harvard Law School. Of the many courses he taught over 50 years, it is his torts class, which he described as the "formative part" of the legal education experience, that stands out most in the minds of his former students. His skilled practice of the Socratic Method helped create generations of successful lawyers.

At the 2001 Commencement Exercises, we honored Professor Koffler with a Special Trustees Award in recognition for his many years of teaching and scholarship. And in 2003, we established the Joseph H. Koffler Scholarship in order to perpetuate his name in the opportunities offered to generations of law students to come.

Today, those of us who knew Professor Koffler personally continue to be inspired by his brilliance and dedication to students. He gave his life to the School through a career he found endlessly challenging and absorbing. In doing so, he has become synonymous with the New York Law School experience. On behalf of the entire New York Law School community, I recognize him for the countless lives he has touched and for paving the way for the amazing faculty we have with us today. Joe Koffler was indeed our trusted colleague and friend.

* Dean and President, New York Law School.