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Introduction

Ross Sandler
New York Law School

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ROSS SANDLER

Introduction

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ross Sandler is a professor of law at New York Law School and director of the Center for New York City Law.

Mayor Edward I. Koch, on becoming mayor on January 1, 1978, appointed Allen G. Schwartz as Corporation Counsel to head New York City's 400-lawyer law office. The office Schwartz took over had, during the fiscal crisis, declined dramatically under Mayor Abraham D. Beame. The Law Department's staff had shrunk, its morale was dismal, and its ability to fight for the city was more limited than at almost any point in its 300-year history. Allen Schwartz accepted the task of rebuilding the Law Department. His successful efforts remain to this day.

Michael Cardozo, the current Corporation Counsel, knew this history and wanted that history to be preserved and made available for the public and for future lawyers at the Law Department. He secured funding to hire New York University School of Law Professor William E. Nelson to write a history of the Law Department and of the persons holding the position of Corporation Counsel. With the approaching publication of Nelson's book, *Fighting For The City*, New York Law School and the Law Department agreed to hold a symposium around the book as a way to honor the Law Department and to augment Professor Nelson's history with recollections by those who most recently held Law Department positions.

On February 6, 2008, New York Law School convened a half-day symposium timed to coincide with the publication of Professor Nelson's book. Seven of the eight living Corporation Counsels participated. They were: Frederick A.O. Schwartz, Jr. (1982-86), Peter Zimroth (1987-89), Victor Kovner (1990-91), Peter Sherwood (1991-93), Paul A. Crotty (1994-97), Michael D. Hess (1998-01), and Michael Cardozo (2002-present). Norman Redlich (1972-73) had planned to attend but was too ill to participate. He had, however, been available to Professor Nelson during the writing of his book.

Presenting the seven Corporation Counsels as a single panel stretched the capacity of New York Law School's Stiefel Room to provide equal seating on a single dais. It also stretched the referee role of the panel's moderator, Professor Eric Z. Lane of Hofstra Law School, who had the assignment of making sure that each of the seven Corporation Counsels received equal time.

The result was lively and informative as each Corporation Counsel in turn shared his recollections of the Law Department and the major issues that occupied his tenure. The conversation became so lively that Mayor Koch, who had given the keynote address and was now sitting in the first row of the audience, raised his hand to join in the comments. He was immediately recognized by Professor Lane. Mayor Koch joined the panel, but spoke from the floor as there was no more room on the dais. To the delight of the audience of nearly 300, the enlarged panel commented on the triumphs and difficulties experienced by the Law Department over the past thirty years.

Following that unique panel, three lawyers currently at the Law Department discussed particular aspects of the special role of the department. They were Jeffrey D. Friedlander, Leonard Koerner, and Gail Rubin. They have turned their remarks into articles for this issue. This issue also contains the extended symposium remarks by New York Law School Professor William P. LaPiana, who presented an analysis of Professor Nelson's work and the more general historical context in which the culture of the Law Department developed.

The symposium was more than a forum for Professor Nelson's book. It was also a celebration of the Law Department and the role it plays in the government of the city of New York. The participants reflected on the professionalism of the Law Department as it was encouraged and led by Allen Schwartz and his mentor Mayor Koch. The remarkable fact is that thirty years after Schwartz's appointment, the Law Department has retained under his successors the ethic and culture of a professional law office, which was the central goal set by Allen Schwartz in 1978. Professor Nelson's book was dedicated to the memory of Allen Schwartz. It could equally be said that the symposium and this issue of the *New York Law School Law Review* are also dedicated to this extraordinary lawyer and public servant, and to the Law Department that is his legacy.