

1-1-1994

## A TRIBUTE TO DEAN HOWARD I. KALODNER

William H. Abraskhin

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.law.wne.edu/lawreview>

---

### Recommended Citation

William H. Abraskhin, *A TRIBUTE TO DEAN HOWARD I. KALODNER*, 16 W. New Eng. L. Rev. xvii (1994), <http://digitalcommons.law.wne.edu/lawreview/vol16/iss1/1>

This Tribute is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Review & Student Publications at Digital Commons @ Western New England University School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Western New England Law Review by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Western New England University School of Law. For more information, please contact [pnewcombe@law.wne.edu](mailto:pnewcombe@law.wne.edu).

## A TRIBUTE TO DEAN HOWARD I. KALODNER\*

JUDGE WILLIAM H. ABRASHKIN\*\*

As I review the list of those who have been asked to write about Dean Howard I. Kalodner, I feel that bittersweet tug of time passing. I am the only person on the list who attended the Law School in the years before the Dean's arrival. Like Job's messenger and Melville's Ishmael, I alone have survived to tell about it.

This is a serious responsibility. If we wish to understand ourselves in the present, we must understand our past. So it is only in the context of the history of the Law School that Dean Kalodner's remarkable contributions to our alma mater can be fully appreciated.

Journey with me, then, back to the summer of 1977, as we drive down Wilbraham Road, past the vacant lot where the Blake Law Center someday will stand. We turn right on Tinkham Road, and pull into the Law School's old temporary campus.

There, we find an institution in limbo. Its past as a part-time night school recently behind it, the school has determined to join its celebrated Eastern sisters in the ranks of full-time institutions of legal education. The rented space from which it is launching this venture, however, leaves, kindly speaking, a lot to be desired. Flies buzz through doors propped open for relief from the August heat. The undersized, overcrowded classrooms nevertheless are stifling, and in them it is hard to see and to hear. The library is basic, and specialized facilities, such as moot courtrooms, are non-existent. Clinical programs are unheard of. There is no law review. The talented and exciting teachers — the Bakers, Dunns, Harpazes, and Metzgers, to name but four — are still outnumbered.

Superimposed upon these difficulties is an administrative chaos that dominates and demoralizes the life of the school. Third year students have spent their first year amidst strife and turmoil that

---

\* Editor's Note: Tributes to Dean Kalodner written by Janet H. Pumphrey ('90), Christine L. Chinni ('91), and Peter M. Seka ('92) will appear in volume 16.2.

\*\* First Justice of Hampden County Housing Court; first Editor-in-Chief of *Western New England Law Review*.

have swept a troubled dean from office. Their second year has been one of treading water under an interim administration which, while deserving credit for restoring stability, does not have as its strongest suit the Vision Thing. While it might not qualify for federal disaster relief, it is no wonder that full accreditation for this struggling institution is still an uncertain goal.

In this uninspiring scenario, it was hardly a given that a candidate for the deanship possessing the qualifications of a Howard I. Kalodner, then a magna cum laude Harvard Law School graduate serving as a Professor of Law at New York University School of Law, would apply. Nor was it inevitable that the Board of the College would have the foresight — encouraged, to be sure, by faculty lobbying and student petitions — to offer the man from the Big Apple the job.

And even after the offer was made, there had to be second thoughts in the private mind of the Dean-to-be. As the application process revealed to him the realities of the school, a “thanks but no thanks” would have been no surprise. But his decision was positive, underscoring the wisdom that where lesser minds see obstacles, greater minds see opportunity.

And what advantage Dean Kalodner has made of the opportunity. Arriving on the scene with whirlwind energy, he created the impression that something exciting was happening with the school, and step by step the reality followed. Be it overseeing the transition to the school’s modern new facility, attracting a faculty of quality and diversity, strengthening the school’s vital clinical programs, raising funds, building an alumni network; in these and in so many other ways, Dean Kalodner has been a central player in the successful two-decade effort to bring the Western New England School of Law into full and honorable membership in the community of great Massachusetts law schools.

The Dean’s style of leadership is illustrated by his approach to the school’s fledgling law review. When the faculty decided that the time was right to start up the publication that was to become the *Western New England Law Review*, the Faculty Law Review Committee wondered, sensibly enough, whether the first Board of Editors might be reaching too high to try to produce Volume I Issue 1 of a genuine, honest-to-goodness law review. Perhaps, the Committee cautioned, the Board should content itself with a stripped-down,

pre-Law Review prototype model that could be disowned and re-engineered if it proved not to be roadworthy.

Possessed more of energy and chutzpah than experience, the first Board of Editors thought we could pull off the real thing. Whatever his private misgivings (the Dean, after all, knew what it took and we didn't), Dean Kalodner, along with the Committee, gave us the green light. The result was a year of exhaustion, mistakes, reinventing every wheel in the machinery, final exhilaration (yes, I do remember the Managing Editor actually kissing the page proofs when they finally came through) — and a credible Volume I Issue 1 which the Dean and the Board could point to as an important step in the coming-of-age of the School. It does not diminish the fine tutoring and support we received from others, such as Professors Dunn and Baker, to observe that without the active support of the Dean we never could have hit the mark at which we aimed.

This, then, is the perspective on Howard Kalodner's contribution that I would like to pass along to that majority of Law School Graduates who attended the school under his Deanship and who do not have experience with that which came before. What you have had in your education, and what you will continue to have in the value of your law degree, was not inevitable, but exists in large part because of the hard work, determination and talent of Dean Howard Kalodner. On behalf of all fellow graduates, I extend to Dean Kalodner deep appreciation for a job well done. To soon-to-be Professor Kalodner, we are delighted that you have chosen to continue to contribute to the Law School and to help shape the education of future generations of students for many years to come.