

*In Celebration of The Hartford County Bar Association's
225th Year Anniversary*

Edited version of Remarks by Kathryn Calibey, President Hartford County Bar Association at the Marriott Hartford Downtown on December 8, 2009

I am so happy and privileged to acknowledge all the distinguished guests here tonight: Senator Dodd, Honorable Jurists of the Supreme and Appellate Courts, the many Judges of the Superior Court; My fellow local and specialty Bar Presidents; Livia Barndollar, President of the CBA, UConn Law School Dean Jeremy Paul; and last, but certainly not least, every Hartford County Bar Association Member, Committee Chair, Past-President and their families and friends. Welcome.

225 years ago on November 14, 1783 the beginnings of The Hartford County Bar Association were penned in a document signed by a formidable group of thirty two men. On this historic occasion, the words of Albert Einstein come to mind- "To look to the future we must first look back upon the past. That is where the seeds of the future were planted."

Hartford County Bar members during the earliest years were instrumental in not only developing the profession but they were scholars, judges and the founders of Hartford's leading law firms. Throughout the years, Association members continued to make significant contributions to the legal and Hartford County Community. Tonight we celebrate that dedicated participation of our membership. Tonight we celebrate the countless volunteer hours our members have devoted to the betterment of our profession and our community.

Early records of the 1920's reveal that while the major activities of the Bar Association involved acting upon applications for admission to the Bar and adopting memorial resolutions to honor deceased members – there has existed since that time a long history of cooperative interaction with the courts addressing issues ranging from crowded court conditions to establishing court procedures. This close working relationship between Hartford County's bench and bar transcends many years and is as strong today as it was over 85 years ago.

We, as an organization, have been at the forefront of addressing issues that have had a major impact on our members and the public:

- *During World War II, a Military Affairs Committee was appointed. It was through this Committee that the Association's newsletter entitled "Bar-fly" was born. It began as rather humorous monthly pamphlet published and broadcast to those bar members in the service to keep them informed of the state of legal affairs at home. The committee however, also addressed the more serious needs of returning soldiers upon their re-entry into the practice of law by coordinating and establishing classes and access to legal research materials.*

- *1944 was the year of the infamous Hartford circus fire. Association members were fast to assist in resolving the many legal issues that arose. The Association formed a Bar Disaster Committee that worked with the various parties in coming to a settlement resolution and adopted a much praised reduced attorney's fee schedule for the benefit of the victims.*
- *In the mid-1960's, in the face of housing discriminatory practices against non-whites – the Association actively supported and worked toward open and equal housing opportunities within Hartford County. Included among the Bar efforts was a symposium series on the “Lawyer’s Role in Open Housing” held at the University of Connecticut Law School.*

While lawyers have often been denounced as self-indulgent, we should all take pride that our Association, has had a sustained record of providing assistance and legal representation to those in need:

- *In 1938, the Association assigned a Legal Aid Committee to address the growing need of legal representation to the poor. The committee's efforts spawned a newly devised system of legal aid for the Greater Hartford area where young Association lawyers volunteered their services to those unable to pay.*
- *In 1965 the Association worked with the City's Community Renewal Team to help establish a new non-profit corporation in the north-end of Hartford known as Neighborhood Legal Services. Our members were among those appointed as the first directors of that corporation.*
- *In 1968 the Volunteer Defenders Program was launched by a group of Association lawyers to provide counsel for indigent criminal defendants. In the first two years of operation over 1,500 people were represented by the group.*
- *In 1972 twenty Association lawyers formed a Volunteer Legal Aid Program to help staff the Hartford County Legal Aid Society Office.*
- *And, in 1999 the Hartford County Bar Foundation was established as a non-profit charitable organization which raises and distributes funds to benefit the homeless, hungry and other needy persons throughout Hartford County. Funded through the generosity of Association members, the Foundation has raised and distributed over \$200,000.*

Today, our Members are also involved in the Association's lawyer referral program; participating in mentoring, court visitation and credit awareness projects with high school students; presenting annual Law Day ceremonies and discussing legal issues with the community through the radio program "Law Talk."

But the heart of our organization is not sustained solely by the "work" of our members. The Hartford County Bar Association is indeed special. It is where lawyers, young and old, experienced and new, of all specialties, have come together for centuries and found a common bond of friendship, camaraderie, and respect. It is from this bond that our members have celebrated together with the once Bards Club theatrical and musical performances, and the ongoing annual outings and Barrister's Ball.

To all members of our Association – it is with great pride, in this 225th year, that I congratulate you and thank you for your unwavering support of this time honored organization.

PAST PRESIDENT TRIBUTE:

From the inception of our Association, certain members have been elevated by the membership to serve in the leadership role of Hartford County Bar Association President. Beginning with our oldest known past president, Charles Enoch Perkins, former elected Bar leaders of our Association consistently have been accomplished attorneys, politicians and businessmen. Charles Perkins was the nephew of Harriet Beecher Stowe and the son of Enoch Perkins, one of the original signers of the 1783 document establishing the framework which formed the Association. He was a prominent attorney, whose clients included Samuel Clemens, and a partner in the firm Perkins & Perkins, which later evolved into the firm now known as Howard, Kohn, Sprague and Fitzgerald. He was elected president of the Bar Association in 1886 and served in that capacity for an astounding 31 years.

Charles Perkins exemplifies the stature and commitment of all our past presidents. Each president since Charles Perkins has played a pivotal role in shaping our organization. Each has brought forth his or her unique personality and talents to confront the challenges of the day. Each has served with diligence and professionalism. Every president has worked to improve relations between bar members, the judiciary and the public. Every past president has prominently fostered and enhanced the Association while continuing the tradition of focused effort and excellence established by their predecessors.

It is most appropriate that on this 225 year anniversary of our Association that we honor those individuals – our past presidents- who have served this organization through their passion and vision. We are extremely fortunate that an extraordinary number of our past presidents have joined us tonight. At this time, I would like to individually recognize them and present each of them with a special token to remember this historic occasion. Please join me in thanking all our past presidents for their immeasurable service to our organization. I also thank the many law firms, families and friends here in

support of members who have served as president of the Hartford County Bar Association.

Several years ago the Association formed a History Committee which is chaired by Mark Rosenblum. Its mission was, in part, to reconstruct and compile information about the Association's past. I am very pleased to present tonight, as a special memento of this anniversary year, the result of the Committee's first major project - a publication on the Bar presidents. The publication, which was made possible through the generous support of LEXIS NEXIS, contains biographical sketches of all deceased bar presidents beginning in 1886 and quotes from all our contemporary presidents. It is quite a remarkable collection that reflects the preeminence of not only those contained within it, but the stellar quality of our membership at large.

CLOSING REMARKS:

I cannot close the event tonight without thanking the Association's incredible staff, whose work provides the underlying support and continuity necessary for the seamless executive transitions and the everyday workings of the organization. Please join me in thanking our Executive Director, Jan Ambruso and Jeanette Bonee, Carolyn Hills and Margaret West. I also would like to especially recognize and thank the members of the Anniversary Celebration Committee for assisting in the organizing this special evening: Judge Alexandra DiPentima, Judge Anne Dranginis and our president-elect, John King.

I would like to leave you with these final thoughts: As we celebrate our past tonight we should consider what our future path will be. Active membership participation is essential not only to sustain our Bar Association but is the key to building an empowered legal community. Active membership participation is not and should not be limited to a few - the growth and vitality of our organization depends on the involvement of many - young, old, large firms, small offices, corporate, trial and general practice attorneys. In a world where technology has redefined relationships, together we should seize the opportunity to renew our commitment to the HCBA so that it will continue into the future as an essential resource to lawyers, judges and the Hartford community.

Thank you all so much for coming to celebrate with us. Good night.