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John the Good Indeed

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Cover Page Footnote

Fordham Law School, Class of '66. Partner, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom.

JOHN THE GOOD INDEED

*William P. Frank**

John David Feerick arrived at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom as a summer associate in 1960. He became a full time associate in August 1961 and a partner in November 1968.

John was the “wunderkind” from Fordham Law School: first in his class, Editor and Chief of the *Law Review*, and a budding constitutional scholar.

His early mentors at the firm were among the most prominent members of the New York Bar—Bill Meagher (Fordham Law School '27, the right hand at Davis Polk of John W. Davis, the great Supreme Court advocate and Presidential candidate); Leslie Arps (the right hand of Justice John Harlan while at Root Clarke, now Dewey Ballantine); Peter Mullen, the firm's first executive partner and Joe Flom, the towering giant of American corporate law and the bedrock of Skadden, Arps. Quite a lineage!

John handled every aspect of litigation when he arrived but then began to specialize in labor and employment law. He represented both management and unions and became a nationally recognized labor lawyer until 1982 when the Fordham Law School lured him away with bundles of money with which our firm could not possibly compete!

At Skadden, Arps John helped set the firm's standard of excellence which Les Arps called “upper margin.” He was known to be precise and concise in his legal analysis and word craftsmanship. Every word of a document was reviewed and/or edited by him a multitude of times. He was meticulous. He checked the address on the envelope to make sure it was correct. He would take forty-pages and turn them into fifteen, which was a better product and directly on the mark. He had a sense of what was right and what was persuasive. He was also known for his legendary long hours. His office was both a workplace and bedroom during many all-nighters. Many weekends John brought his six children to the office. As you would expect, they played all over the office while John worked.

John was renowned at the firm and throughout the City for his legal abilities, scholarship, outstanding writing, and advocacy. He was himself a superb mentor. Some of the best lawyers in the country

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were hired by John and mentored by him. He was also known for his creativity in solving the problems of clients. John was the lawyer that you wanted to represent you with your own legal problems. He may not have known all the subtleties of a particular area of the law, but you know he would learn them inside and out and then be the absolute, most effective advocate for your position.

He loved being a lawyer and our attorneys wanted to work with him. He had fun and got the job done. He was also relentless in his mission. Part of the lore of our firm was his ability in 1970 to get ahold of me while I was hiking with packhorses in the High Andes in Peru, long before faxes, e-mail, and cellular communications became common. He was the firm's star pitcher in the Central Park Lawyers' Softball League, one day pitching a one hitter against Ted Sorensen. He still claims the "hit" was really an error by the rest of us.

Along with his firm work, he spent countless hours in the sixties and seventies writing articles, reports, and books for committees of the City of New York and the American Bar Associations. He also found time to help draft the twenty-fifth Amendment which all started with an article he wrote in the *Fordham Law Review*. And, of course, we all knew of his decades-long devotion to Fordham University and its Law School. John's impact on all these areas of the law was nothing less than monumental.

But what really distinguished John Feerick was his integrity, character, kindness, and tireless efforts to help others, whether they were clients, colleagues, staff, or lawyers in and outside the firm. He was the first chairman of the firm's Quality of Life Committee because that was his focus, the quality of life of others, not his own. As busy as he always was—and he was busy—he always had time to help someone with a professional, family, or personal problem. Having had an office next to John for many years, I saw countless people come to his office as early as 7:00 in the morning and as late as midnight seeking his help. He was generous with his time and always listened. Our partner, Barry Garfinkel, declared that he was "John the Good" because that is how everyone viewed him. You always wanted him on your side. People would listen to John because he brought with himself a sense of integrity and fairness.

When you travel the country and now the world and identify yourself as a graduate of the Fordham Law School, people will immediately mention John Feerick and then go on to describe him as a scholar, a leader, and always a gentleman. John the Good indeed.