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## My Friend John

James F. Gill

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## My Friend John

### Cover Page Footnote

James F. Gill, '56. Managing Partner, Robinson, Silverman, Pearce, Aronsohn & Berman LLP.

## MY FRIEND JOHN

*James F. Gill\**

I first came to know John Feerick in the late 1980s when I became active with the Fordham Law School Alumni Association. I served as Chairman of the Annual Fund and subsequently became the President of the Alumni Association. Since then John and I have become the closest of friends.

John Feerick is *many* things and *sui generis*. Because of the way in which he conducts himself, he is frequently referred to as “John the Good” and “St. John.” I think that those references are due to the fact that he is a quiet man of genuine humility. He is also is a kind, gentle, understanding and compassionate man. In all the years that I have known John, I have never heard him say anything ill of another person. I mean that literally. I know of no other person about whom I can make that statement. That is a unique quality and indeed a saintly one. He also made an enormous financial sacrifice when he became our dean because he thought that the training of able and decent young lawyers was more important.

John decided early in his deanship that the Law School should be free and clear of controversy. Accordingly, he did not speak out on controversial matters. Instead, he used his considerable negotiating skills to fashion compromises acceptable to all, and he invariably prevailed.

It is my judgment that as he approaches retirement after twenty magnificent years as our Dean, we will see a somewhat different John Feerick. More particularly, we will see him take positions unhesitatingly and defend them forcefully.

Although most know that John is a tireless worker, he has a side that few people appreciate because he rarely shows it. He is intensely competitive. For twenty years, he exercised his will in a way which was almost imperceptible.

He varied and expanded our faculty dramatically. He improved the quality of our student body exponentially. He raised enormous sums of money, although he hated every minute of it, to build out our physical plant. Because of his dogged, albeit quiet, tenacity, a substantial number of our students now live at the residence located at

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the Lincoln Center Campus. Recently, he launched another major building campaign which will provide our law school with an additional new building.

He expanded our curriculum in an incredible way and initiated a graduate program, a clinical program, a program for human rights and an advocacy program. As a result of all this, Fordham Law School was ranked thirty-two in the country in the U.S. News and World Report survey of 2001! We've come a long way since I entered our law school on September of 1953, when it was located at 302 Broadway.

But the feature of John's deanship that I admire and respect the most is, that in leading our law school to unprecedented academic heights and national recognition, he not only maintained but indeed enhanced our old values and traditions. He recognized that in our relentless pursuit of excellence, we should never strive to be someone else and always remain what we are!

Fordham Law School *always* treasured and taught ethics in the law and now under John's leadership, we have the Louis Stein Center for Law and Ethics.

Fordham Law School *always* encouraged public services and now, under John's leadership, our law school has the finest Public Services Program in the country.

Fordham Law School *never* discriminated in admissions against anyone for any reason. As early as 1914, a black man was admitted to our law school. And in 1941, our law school admitted Frances Berko, a very seriously disabled women of Jewish faith, when other graduate schools rejected her out of hand. And now, under John's leadership, we have an Affirmative Action program and a program for disabled, which are second to none in the country.

Fordham Law School has *always* been available to those who have to work during the day and, thanks to John's insistence, we still have night session.

John Feerick's legacy to our law school is unmatched and will never be equaled.

John, I know of your great love for your mother and father and I know that you measure all that you do through their eyes. I am certain that your days as Dean of Fordham Law School "in the service of others" has pleased them beyond words.

And the best part is that there's more to come!