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LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

MICHAEL COOPER

OF COUNSEL AT SULLIVAN & CROMWELL

It has been a lifetime of achievement, in keeping with the name of the award, but Michael has not lost his zeal.

BY ALBERT M. ROSENBLATT

It is called the Lifetime Achievement Award. Some observers might take this to mean that the honoree has concluded a lifetime of doing very good things, and is now ready to sit back in contented repose. That is not what is going on here. We still expect a lot more of Michael Cooper, we really do.

He is responsible for this state of affairs, for unflinchingly stepping up for the Good Cause, and so we have come to expect it of him. Wisely, the *New York Law Journal* has based the award on one's "impact on the legal community and the practice of law." The standard is not what the honoree has done to win fame, but what the honoree has done for others: the legal community and, in turn, the larger community.

As a prominent lawyer, Michael shines. He was managing partner of Sullivan & Cromwell's litigation group from 1978 to 1985. His eminence as a practitioner in commercial litigation, shareholder derivative suits, antitrust, securities, banking law and related fields is unsurpassed. When the Firm has needed advice on ethics it has called on him.

Michael's reputation is national, and for good reason. He served on the American Bar Association Task Force on Civil Trial Practice Standards. He was a Trustee of the Federal Bar Council, and President of the American College of Trial Lawyers after serving as a regent.

But the light shines brighter still because Michael, the ultimate lawyer, has made time to take on leadership roles in ways that advanced the lives of others—often those most in need. He helped found the Lawyers Assistance Program, which aided lawyers beset by alcohol, drugs, or other addictions, and has served more than 4,000 people. He was co-chair of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, an activity that grew out of his duration as President of the New York Legal Aid Society. He chaired a task force of the New York City Bar Association, studying ways to help offenders get jobs and become productive.

Disclosure: I've known Michael for over 60 years, as law school classmates. I officiated at the wedding of his son,

Jeffrey, a renowned law professor. Added disclosure: My wife Julie and I are also fans of Mike's talented wife, Nan, and so I may carry a bias. Still, I marvel at how he could

excel in big-time lawsuits at one moment and, in the next, look after the impoverished or work to release someone from Guantanamo as part of his pro bono universe

Judith Kaye, our late beloved Chief Judge, also thought the world of Michael. We might be discussing some issue vexing the profession, and as often as not, Judith would exclaim: "I have a great idea. Let's call Mike Cooper!"

Around the time that Michael was President of the City Bar, it sponsored the final rounds of a nationwide law school moot court competition. We served together as judges on a three-member bench in the Great Hall on the second floor—you know, the room with the bright red carpet and the elegant black chairs, an apt setting (where from his picture on the wall he now greets us). It was as though he grew up on the woosack, asking the orators questions, as courteous as they were astute. Michael would have made a very good judge.

Mystery writers speak of someone living a double life. This usually means that one, if not both lives, were bad. The phrase smacks of duplicity. Might I propose another coinage? A double life, both lived with integrity and with exemplary loyalty to those at opposite ends of the spectrum, and everyone in-between. I think that captures it nicely, and defines the honoree, Michael Cooper.

It has been a lifetime of achievement, in keeping with the name of the award, but Michael has not lost his zeal. And so we might speak not of a life lived, but a living life, still marked by his benevolent impact on the legal community and beyond.

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