

BLSLawNotes

THE MAGAZINE OF BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL | FALL 2010



ON THE ROAD TO THE AMERICAN DREAM:

Brooklyn Law School Leads the Way
in Immigration Law

On Board

Constructing the Law: Frederick Cohen '67

Fifteen years ago, recalls Fred Cohen, it all began over a 90-second conversation with Dean David G. Trager at a Brooklyn Law School holiday party. "I walked into the party, and Dean Trager was greeting people. 'I introduced myself and told him I was a construction lawyer. He asked for my card and said: 'I may need you some day.' Two years later, my phone rang. Dean Trager was on the line. 'Fred,' he said, 'I need you.'"

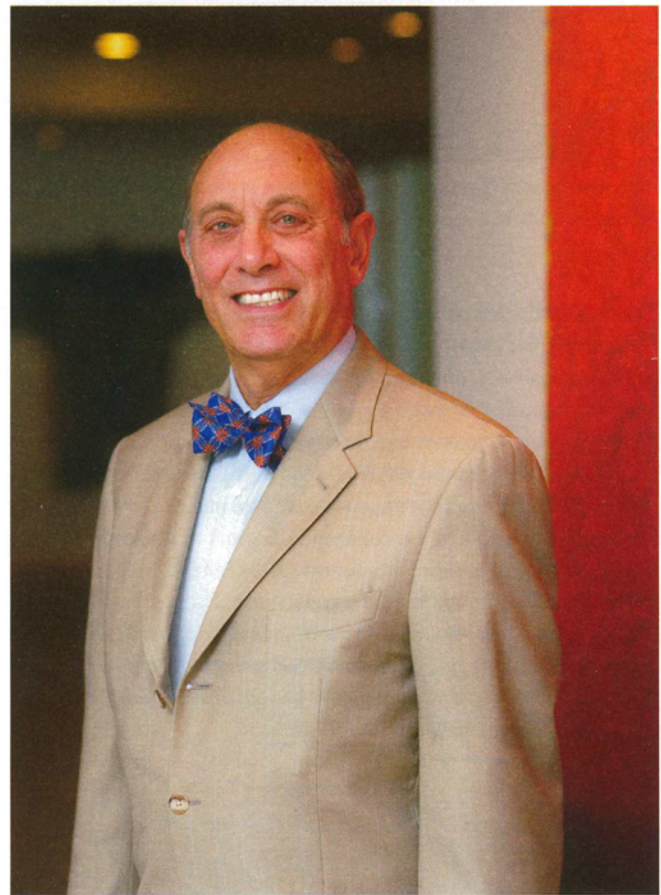
As it turned out, the Law School was dealing with a few issues relating to the construction of the new addition at 250 Joralemon Street. A seasoned construction attorney with 35 years of experience as a trial lawyer, Cohen swiftly and surely resolved the issues. Cohen remained a trusted advisor to the Law School, and in 1997, he was elected to the Board of Trustees. "It's a position I really enjoy. I am very happy to help to guide the Law School in making important strategic decisions, especially in my particular areas of expertise: real estate and construction. It's an opportunity to give back which is very important to me and in the process I meet lots of interesting people," he said. Since joining the Board, Cohen has certainly done his share of giving back. He has been indispensable to the Law School, playing a dual role as trustee and lawyer in the selection of the contractor and the negotiation of the contract for the construction of Feil Hall, the Law School's 22-story residential building. He continues to advise the School with respect to ongoing real estate issues.

Cohen, a Brooklyn native who hails from the Flatbush neighborhood, fell into a career in construction law almost by accident. He graduated from Brooklyn Law School in 1967 and began searching for a job during the height of the Vietnam War. Many firms were shying away from hiring draft-age lawyers, who might be called up for military service at any moment. But a small construction firm gave him a start. He joined the practice, loved the work, and stayed. "Construction law is basically contract law, with lots of other elements within it — insolvency, labor, insurance, and suretyship," he said. "That's what makes the field interesting." He remained at the firm for 11 years then opened up his own shop with colleague Allen Ross in 1978.

More than 40 years later, the two are still partners, but now at Duane Morris, where their practice focuses on the representation of some of the largest owners, developers, and non-profit institutions in the country. They also represent contractors and sureties in the private and public sectors. Cohen is known for his skill at negotiating and drafting complex construction contracts for hospitals, university facilities, office buildings and high-rise residential buildings. His experience also includes litigating issues involving delays, defective performance, and structural failures. Cohen was recognized as one of the leading construction attorneys in New York in the 2008, 2009, and 2010 *Chambers USA Guide to America's Leading Business Lawyers*.

Cohen is known as much for his skill as a negotiator and litigator as he is for his distinctive style — and in particular, his bow ties. "I used to wear regular ties for fear that juries would judge me and think my taste for bow ties was odd. Ultimately I got the self confidence to wear them, and now I only wear them," said Cohen, who favors the elegant and avant garde designs by Carrot and Gibbs, a Colorado-based manufacturer of the "definitive bow."

Over the decades since he graduated, Cohen has witnessed the remarkable growth of the Law School, and is proud to continue helping guide its development. "It has a faculty that inspires, an out-



standing curriculum that gives students many choices, and a strong and growing alumni community," he said. "But it has been the untiring leadership of two deans, David Trager and Joan Wexler, in particular, and the shared vision of my fellow board members that have brought BLS to its prominent status today. As a board member I am looking forward to the challenges of the future." □