

ARCHDIOCESAN LEGAL NETWORK

Twentieth Anniversary Dinner

September 11, 2009

PRESENTATION OF AWARD TO MILAN MISKOVSKY, ESQ.

by Steven M. Schneebaum

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It was supposedly Sir Isaac Newton who, when he was asked how he was able to accomplish all of the remarkable things he did in his life, said that he was able to see farther than anyone else because he stood on the shoulders of giants.

As we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Archdiocesan Legal Network this evening, and congratulate ourselves on how far we have come, it is appropriate for us to pay tribute to the giants on whose shoulders we have stood. And for that reason, it is a particular pleasure to honor the invaluable contributions of Mike Miskovsky, the founding Chair of the Network's Advisory Council.

Of course, the inspiration for the Network lay in the vision of the man who conceived of all this, James Cardinal Hickey. But Cardinal Hickey, as he always liked to say, was a canon lawyer and not a civil lawyer: while he recognized the need, he knew that finding a solution – finding the beginning of a solution – would require the investment of the time and talent of the most senior, the most accomplished, and the most compassionate members of our city's Bar.

And Cardinal Hickey knew what he had to do. He contacted Mike Miskovsky, and charged Mike with the responsibility of making his dream a reality.

His Eminence got that right. What we see around us this evening is testament to Mike's ability to create an organization, and to motivate his colleagues and peers, and his many, many friends, to answer the call.

Mike stood for 12 years at the helm of the Advisory Council, steering the Network through some difficult times, but never wavering in his commitment to serving the poor of the Archdiocese, selflessly and professionally. When he stepped down from the position that he defined by his service, I succeeded him.

I cannot say that I took his place, because no one can take Mike Miskovsky's place. But I followed him, and tried to live up to the standards that he set, as did those who came after me – Henry Rivera, Bob Ruyak, and Elizabeth Meers – and as Bill Lawler will do when he assumes the Chair in October.

Mike involved himself in every aspect of the Network's operations, from the inspired decision to hire Jim Bishop as Senior Program Manager, to the move to the Hickey Center, to budgeting, to

broadening our reach into the legal and client communities. He persuaded lawyers in his own firm, Kirkland & Ellis, and countless others, to donate their energies to the Network's clients. I saw him lose his temper precisely once: one day when he was told that the Network would have to suspend intake, because we did not have sufficient volunteers to handle the volume of the need. That was an outcome Mike could not, and did not, accept. The Network simply could not and would not trim its sails: intake was expanded, not contracted, and the results are what we see and celebrate tonight.

Mike's example and his leadership created the finest legal service provider in the City. The Network is ecumenical in its clients and volunteers (and, as I can certainly testify, in its Advisory Council). It has helped innumerable people to get their lives in order.

Of course, the Archdiocesan Legal Network is not the only service Mike has provided to his community over his long and distinguished career. He was among the founders of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights. He served his country, as legal officer at the CIA, the Federal Maritime Commission, and the Department of the Treasury. But all of us who have come to know him well through this wonderful Legal Network believe that this has been a special labor of love for Mike Miskovsky.

Here is the text of the certificate:

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington presents this award
on behalf of the clients, volunteers, and staff of the Archdiocesan Legal Network
with love and deepest appreciation for your exemplary leadership
as the first Chair of the Advisory Council of the Archdiocesan Legal Network,
which has provided pro bono civil legal services to the most vulnerable among us since 1989.

I am delighted to present the James Cardinal Hickey 20th Anniversary Award to the man who made all of this happen, our founding Chairman and our role model, Milan C. Miskovsky.