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## Albert J. Rosenthal in Grateful Appreciation

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*The editors dedicate this issue to Albert J. Rosenthal on the occasion of his retirement as Dean of the Columbia Law School and his return to teaching and scholarship.*

## ALBERT J. ROSENTHAL IN GRATEFUL APPRECIATION

What a joy it is to work with Al Rosenthal! And how fortunate we are that our remarkable colleague will continue to grace the faculty to which he is devoted.

It is customary upon assuming a deanship to say nice things about your predecessor, and Al Rosenthal was no exception five years ago. But I mean far more than to return a compliment when I note how splendidly my successor as Dean, with a gently guiding hand, has enhanced the intellectual life of our law school, strengthening both faculty and student body and augmenting the support for their work. He returns to teaching and research in a school that is stronger than ever before.

No one is surprised by the extent of these achievements, except perhaps Al Rosenthal himself, a man of genuine and abiding humility whom I have known as close friend and colleague for twenty years. His modesty and consummate decency put one in mind of Victor Borge's description of Beethoven as "such a nice fellow it's a wonder he amounted to anything at all." Even those doubting Beethoven fans who question whether Al's achievements truly rival the *Ninth Symphony* acknowledge that Al Rosenthal is by far the more attractive human being.

Perhaps the finest attribute of Al Rosenthal's deanship has been his ability to attract promising young faculty and established scholars of outstanding quality. Nothing could be more important to our future.

The high regard in which Al holds faculty, students, and alumni is fully reciprocated. My own confidence in him has been unbounded, despite the gnawing regret that he first learned the law in Cambridge, Massachusetts, rather than on Morningside Heights. This early indiscretion was more than atoned for through wartime service with the Army Air Corps; a spell as attorney for the Office of Price Administration; his clerkship with the inspirational Justice Frankfurter; further government service with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Justice Department, and the Small Defense Plants Administration; and a dozen years of successful private law practice before he fully became a Columbian as Professor of Law in 1964 and the Maurice T. Moore Professor of Law in 1973.

Columbia had earlier come to value Al's service as director of two important projects for the university's Legislative Drafting Research Fund. Later he brought his expertise in environmental law to bear on landmark studies of the impact of airports and automobiles, conducted by the National Academies of Sciences and Engineering and the National Science Foundation. His expertise in constitutional and human rights law informed his work as consultant to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and director of the volunteer attorney's program to enforce the equal employment opportunity provisions of the Civil Rights Act.

He is a splendid citizen, gently forceful, unafraid of controversy, outspoken wherever he perceives danger—as a widely published and eminently sensible advocate of presidential electoral reform; as a hearing officer for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation on the air quality impact of Westway; as a champion of educational opportunity and financial assistance to students. Two years ago, delivering the Charles Evans Hughes Memorial Lecture to the New York County Lawyers' Association, he warned:

The retreat from our national ideals is occurring simultaneously on a number of fronts, and the prospects of the kind of America that will emerge from it is depressing indeed.

. . . . Come what may, we will continue to turn out lawyers; that isn't the issue. What is important is that we keep the entrance to the legal profession open to all regardless of financial background; in a very real sense our democratic institutions, our society as a whole, and our national ideals depend upon our continuing to bring lawyers from every background into the mainstream of our society.<sup>1</sup>

Al Rosenthal has been a superb academic leader both in the law school and in the broader university community—a builder of bridges between disciplines and a problem-solver taking on such complex issues as housing, community relations, externally funded research, academic freedom, and affirmative action, to name but a few areas of concern where he has served Columbia well.

A warm human being—a favorite of students and faculty—with a keen sense of humor and proportion, and an avid interest in others, Al Rosenthal makes us all feel lucky to be here with him at Columbia.

MICHAEL I. SOVERN

*President  
Columbia University*

1. Address by Albert J. Rosenthal, Charles Evans Hughes Memorial Lecture, New York County Lawyers' Association 15-18 (Mar. 18, 1982).