



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

HOWARD GANZ

PARTNER AT PROSKAUER ROSE

The more than 50-year legal career of Howard Ganz is the very definition of lifetime achievement, the award he is receiving from the New York Law Journal. I say this as someone who has known and worked with him for our entire legal “lifetimes,” including as classmates at Columbia Law School, members of the Columbia Law Review, clerks in the Southern District, associates and then partners at Proskauer. Hence my obvious objectivity.



BY MICHAEL CARDOZO

Partner at Proskauer Rose

Not only is Howie a great legal adviser, strategist and advocate, he is the very definition of what a law firm partner should do on behalf of his firm.

He is one of the most distinguished sports lawyers in this country, as many have recognized, including the Sports Business Journal which recently awarded him its prestigious Sports Business Champions award. His career as a sports lawyer began long before “sports law” was recognized as a legal specialty and before the National Basketball Association was viewed as a major player in the sports industry. In the early 1970s, after doing some NBA work early in his career assisting a senior partner, Howie and another associate, David Stern, a classmate of Howie’s and mine at Columbia, assisted a senior partner on resisting (unsuccessfully as it turned out) a motion for a preliminary injunction to enjoin the then-proposed

merger of the American Basketball Association with the NBA.

Six years later, that case, which also included class action claims by NBA players (led by Oscar Robertson) that various NBA contracting restraints were illegal, was settled, and Howie's work negotiating NBA collective bargaining agreements and dealing with player contract rules began. All of these efforts led him to become one of the leading sports lawyers in the country, representing not only the NBA, but Major League Baseball and numerous other sports entities as well.

But Howard Ganz is far more than just a sports lawyer. He has represented many other significant clients, including the National Broadcasting Company, Consolidated Edison, Readers Digest and Time Inc. in numerous high-stakes labor and discrimination matters.

In working with Howie on some of these matters, I have observed his consummate legal craftsmanship. I have seen his extraordinary writing ability, his eloquence and his courtroom skills examining witnesses, including NBA owners, commissioners and players. Of even more significance is his ability to take control of a matter, quickly analyze—based on his always intense preparation and familiarity with the law—the problem presented, and command the respect of clients who listen to his advice and defer to his judgment as to how a particular problem should be handled. He does this with a wry sense of humor and the ability, no matter how high the stakes and pressure, to impose a calming influence on everyone around him.

Howie doesn't get flustered and lose his composure, be it with clients, before occasional hostile and skeptical judges or adversaries. The respect he commands from his clients is matched by respect from his adversaries, including those against whom he regularly litigates, who have publicly expressed their respect for him.

One very special attribute of Howie Ganz that his partners, but not his clients, see on a regular basis is his devotion to the best interests of the firm. Stories abound of Howie serving as a particularly special mentor to junior lawyers. In revising an associate's work, he goes out of his way to explain why he made the changes he did, or why he is handling a matter in a particular way, always with the goal of making the associate a better lawyer. And when the ultimate result in a matter is success, Howie is quick to attribute the victory to the associate's efforts. Conversely, when things don't work out, it is Howie who takes the blame.

Another aspect of Howard Ganz, the law firm partner, can be seen in his service as a member of the Proskauer Executive Committee and as co-chair of the firm's Labor & Employment Department, where he has exhibited business and management skills that are as impressive as his legal abilities. And today, recognizing that he is not getting any younger, he understands his obligation to begin to transition his clients to his younger partners.

A career defined by always working for the best interests of the firm and its clients, and achieving recognition as a leading lawyer in his field, leads to lifetime achievement. Howard Ganz has reached this pinnacle.