



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Thomas A. Demetrio

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Many years ago Tom set the standards for preparation, courtroom practice and professionalism. I've observed Tom Demetrio's unique courtroom skills for more than 40 years. Tom was the first lawyer in Chicago to use horizontal plane, cross sectional brain MRI technology to demonstrate devastating brain injuries.

In addition to my observations from the bench, I've done cases with lawyers from all over the country. On a national level, no lawyer is more deserving of a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Tom is nationally recognized as establishing the standard for the ultimate level of practice in the highest stakes cases. A few years ago, I was doing mediations of air crash cases in Miami, Florida. Invariably, the top tier Miami lawyers referenced the strategies and results Tom Demetrio had attained in presenting and supporting their respective positions.”

Hon. Donald P. O'Connell (Ret.)



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I have known Tom Demetrio from early on in his legal career starting when he was a young associate of Phillip A. Corboy. Since that time, Tom has achieved the pinnacle of success as a trial lawyer, bar association leader, family man and mentor.

Jurors like Tom because he is personable, credible, and charismatic. Judges and defense lawyers respect him as well because he is well prepared and a man of his word. If Tom tells you something, you take it to the bank. I am honored to call him a friend.

Tom has been devoted to his family and dedicated to his clients and our community. He has been philanthropic throughout his career. He has donated large sums of money to his alma maters, the University of Notre Dame and the Chicago Kent College of Law. In addition, he helped raise large sums of money for Chicago Kent College of Law to honor one of his mentors, Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz, for whom its courtroom was named. When Tom was President of the Chicago Bar Association, he founded the Lend A Hand

program which raises money and helps mentor young people in Chicago area grammar and high schools.

He has obtained numerous seven and eight figure verdicts and settlements benefiting the clients of Corboy and Demetrio. In addition, he is a Past President of the Illinois Trial Lawyers and Chicago Bar Association. He has been a fellow of the invitation-only American College of Trial Lawyers and the International Academy for many years. He has also served on the Illinois Supreme Court Pattern Jury Instruction Committee. Many of his proteges have gone on to serve as president of many bar associations and other related legal organizations.

I wish to congratulate Tom on this well-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award. He has had a wonderful career.”

Joseph A. Power Jr., Power Rogers LLP



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I have known Tom for over 60 years, since the 1963 North Suburban High School Golf Championship.

Tom played for Evanston High School and I played for Niles West.

Tom and I had a lot in common. He is half Greek, as am I. We both were married in the Greek Orthodox Church. Tom's lovely wife, Deana, is Greek and my wife Debbie, cooks great Greek food.

Our lives intersected again in 1973. Tom was working for Phil Corboy and I was an associate at Kirkland & Ellis. Tom was representing the family of a man who was a laboratory technician, killed in a laboratory explosion of rocket fuel powder. I was representing a company that owned the rocket fuel powder and was using the lab to manufacture the fuel. The main issue in the case was what caused the fuel powder to ignite. The powder would not ignite even if you dropped a lit match into it.

Tom and I traveled to San Francisco and took depositions in the office of Melvin Belli, who defended Jack Ruby, who killed Lee Harvey

Oswald, the alleged assassin of president John F. Kennedy. Right before trial Tom disclosed an expert witness whose opinion was that a static electric discharge caused the rocket fuel powder to ignite, causing the explosion. He demonstrated how this could happen by walking in front of the jury on the carpeted courtroom floor and touching the metal gate that opens and closes to let jurors enter and leave the courtroom. He received a static spark to his hand. I then watched each of the jurors enter and leave the courtroom by avoiding touching the metal gate with their bare hand. They would use either a gloved hand or would lean up against the gate with their body. This was like magic, using the courtroom to painfully remind the jurors what caused the explosion. I then realized Tom would win the case. This demonstrates Tom's brilliance as a trial lawyer, using the courtroom itself to reinforce his theory of causation.”

John W. Bell, Johnson & Bell Ltd.



“ I have shared with Tom many of the important relationships which the practice of law offers—being opposing counsel, co-counsel in the circuit court, and working together on intricate appeals. From those vantages, I have seen firsthand the tremendous intensity he devotes to his cases. His unflagging attention to detail defies description. Yet at the same time, he possesses an unparalleled ability to seize the essence of a case from those details, and to then cast the key controversies, and their best resolution, in starkly simple terms.

It is emblematic of Tom's scholarship and concern for the law itself that he has described the many years he devoted to service on the

Supreme Court's Committee on Pattern Instructions for Civil cases as being among the most important of his non-client legal endeavors, and that it was as fine a post-graduate legal education as could be found.

His great generosity, of his time, expertise, and resources, is practiced quietly, with widespread benefit. Tom's clients, his firm, and truly the law have immensely benefitted from his sustained work at an extremely high level.”

Michael T. Reagan,
Law Offices of Michael T. Reagan



“ The list of distinguished former Phil Corboy lawyers that would have loved to have been his partner reads like a who's who of famous trial attorneys: Al Hofeld, Richard Phelan and Jack Hayes just to name a few. It was well known that Corboy would never take a partner because to do so would be to admit that he had an equal. And, he never did. Until Tom. That puts Tom Demetrio in a class of ONE. His skills and knowledge of the law remain unparalleled as is evidenced by his incredible trial record. In addition, he did not just try winners – he tried tough cases and virtually always prevailed.

I was able to see Tom progress through his career and then watched him control and persuade from the bench. It was much more relaxing

to make rulings as a judge than argue against him as a litigant. As talented a lawyer as he became, his wagering on the golf course remained suspect. He never met a challenge he did not accept and golf was no exception. It is not surprising that he brings the same approach to life that he always brought to the courtroom. Always a gentleman and friend to all, he continues to guide one of the most powerful law firms to new heights. Though Corboy would never admit it, history has revealed that he met his equal in his partner – Tom Demetrio.”

Hon. William D. Maddux (Ret.)



“ Someone who doesn't know Thomas Demetrio might think that his most memorable cases would be the ones where he's secured record-setting verdicts, including the first 8-figure verdict in Illinois in a personal injury case. Or the \$42.4 medical malpractice verdict he obtained in 2022 for the wife and children of a quadriplegic man who died as the result of medical negligence. Thomas has been ranked the #1 lawyer in Illinois by Super Lawyers for six of the past seven years. But he won't mention that either.

These accolades are not what makes Tom an extraordinary lawyer and person. Tom is professionally devoted to obtaining justice for his clients and he's equally devoted to giving back to underserved communities and to those without access to justice.

Tom is the inspiration and founder of Lawyers Lend-A-Hand, which was started in 1995. It has provided \$2 million in grants to tutoring/mentoring groups over the years and, since 2016, provides direct

mentoring/tutoring to students by Chicago legal professionals. Tom's passion for giving back has resulted in thousands of underserved and at-risk children in Chicago getting the resources they deserve.

Another example of Tom's drive to help people in need is the matter of Kaney O'Neill, who was serving in the U.S. military and was rendered a quadriplegic after a gust of wind knocked her from a balcony. O'Neill's ex-boyfriend was seeking full custody of their infant, alleging O'Neill was unfit because she was quadriplegic. Tom took her case pro bono, schooled himself in domestic relations law, and after a several week hearing, secured full custody for O'Neill. Kaney and her family visit Tom each year, bringing Christmas cookies for him and the entire office.”

Hon. James N. O'Hara (Ret.)



“ I am honored that you asked me to write a short testimonial marking the long and amazing career of Tom. He has received so many of these in his time as a lawyer, mentor, philanthropist and law firm builder that I hope my attempt is not redundant.

Like most young trial lawyers in formation I first encountered Tom watching him represent clients in jury trials in the Daley Center. At a very young age, he was able to go toe-to-toe in the courtroom with the more "mature" lawyers of the 1970's and 1980's because he was always well prepared. Nothing they did to throw him off his game seemed to affect the way he went about trying his case. He did not lose sight of what was important – ensuring that his client received the best possible representation.

We got to know one another when he began to try cases in front of me in the early 2000's. He was professional in his dealings with his opposing counsel, even when opposing counsel tried to draw him into fights in front of the jury. He did not take the bait because he knew

that would not be in his, and his client's, best interest. Due to the many cases he had presented to a jury, he came to understand that he was better when he didn't respond unprofessionally. He displayed a level of calmness, even when things may not have been going as planned, that almost all of his colleagues at the bar never learned to display.

Tom is one of the top trial lawyers in the country but that is not all that he has done for the profession. He has been a bar leader as CBA President, law firm builder, mentor to a wide variety of lawyers and the founder/ funder of a group of attorneys in the Lawyers Lend a Hand program that has worked for years in Engelwood tutoring grammar school students. These are just some of the marvelous things Tom has done. It is time to give this award to one of the legal giants of the past three generations – Tom Demetrio.”

Hon. Thomas L. Hogan (Ret.)

