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4-30-2013

## Ottinger Hall Dedication Remarks

Richard L. Ottinger

*Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University*

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### Recommended Citation

Richard L. Ottinger, Ottinger Hall Dedication Remarks (Apr. 30, 2013), <http://digitalcommons.pace.edu/lawfaculty/885/>.

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# OTTINGER HALL DEDICATION REMARKS

**Remarks by Richard L. Ottinger on the occasion of the dedication of Richard Ottinger Hall at Pace Law School, April 30, 2013**

I want to thank Dean Simon and the Faculty for this incredible honor, and as well the kind people who have written me to say that I actually deserve it. Such an honor usually is reserved for those who are deceased. It is very special to receive this recognition from my colleagues while I still am alive to appreciate it. For any who may have been misled, I endorse the Mark Twain quip, "reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." The wisdom sent me from my longtime friend Gus Speth is that "old deans never die, they just lose their faculties." I am glad I haven't arrived there yet either.

I am very grateful for the kind words of Dean Simon, my good friend and colleague Bobby Kennedy, Pace President Stephen Friedman, our former Law School Dean, whom I so admire, and the others representing our governmental officials who spoke so generously.

This honor comes with many thanks. Tops on my list are my wonderful wife, June, my four children and their spouses, and my 10 grandchildren, five here with us today, all of whom have been so wonderfully supportive to me as I pursued my career.

I particularly thank the donors who have been so very generous in contributing to the Law School in my honor; also David Bernhardt who has been such a great help with all aspects of this event and Library Director Professor Marie Newman and her associates who so very thoughtfully gathered mementos from my careers in the Peace Corps, Congress and the Law School for display in the cases in the central hallway of the classroom building. (I don't think I ever will get used to calling it Richard Ottinger Hall but I hope that you will).

I also pay homage to Professor Jay Carlisle who invited me to be Dean and has been such wonderful and helpful friend -- and the marvelous team that supported me when I was Dean, my associate deans Michael Mushlin and Norman Lichtenstein, and my Administrator, then Vice Dean for External Relations, Alta Levat, Loretta Musial, and all the other wonderful law school staff. Your help made all the difference to my deanship.

Lastly, I thank our students, friends, associates, leaders of the bench and bar, all of you for being with me here today. It is especially wonderful to be joined here today by Ogden Brownie Reid who was my side-kick in Congress and Michael McCabe who was the chief of staff for my congressional committee and most recently was EPA Region III Director. Both are good friends who played a significant part in my life and career.

I know these are a lot of thanks, but I have so much to be thankful for.

No one builds a building by oneself, or a law school either for that matter. This beautiful classroom building was the inspiration of then Pace President Patricia Ewers who conceived of creating this quad connecting our principal buildings and involved herself in every detail of designing and financing the building. She often joked that in creating this quad her greatest sacrifice was to give up her parking space that was previously located here.

The building was built to attract students and to meet their needs. Professor Jeffrey Miller worked with the architects to design the building so that it would have the maximum utility for students. It was his idea to create seating areas in the hallway, each with internet connections. These have proved to be highly popular, and even the occasional faculty member has been seen to slumber there.

The Law School has always prided itself on being uniquely student-friendly, with a faculty devoted foremost to teaching and maintaining an open door policy, always being available to help students to be successful in their studies. I think this is vitally important to our mission and success.

Students are what a university is all about. The greatest joy of teaching is to see our students grow and succeed. We so often learn more from them than they from us. I keep up with many when they graduate and I am grateful to those who came today.

Indeed, the Law School was created by Chancellor Edward Mortola to be student-oriented. The motto he adopted for the entire University was and is "Opportunitas." He conceived of a law school that would provide an opportunity for a legal education to students and faculty of all backgrounds and income classes, and he succeeded.

He also, in keeping with his own life, wanted a law school that stood for the highest values of public service, a school where students and faculty would make a difference by promoting justice, access to the law for all people, and impeccable ethical standards among our graduates, in addition, of course, to getting a job, making a living and paying off the mountain of debt incurred to get here.

I have now made my workplace home at Pace for some 29 years. It is a truly wonderful institution, practicing what Ed Mortola preached. One couldn't wish for a more genial faculty, but also one that is so engaged in involving students in solving real life problems through an extraordinary variety of clinics, moot court competitions and centers of excellence to help to produce practice-ready graduates, but also a law school that inspires its students to become engaged in furthering law as a profession promoting justice for all. As said so eloquently by the late Reverend Martin Luther King, "justice denied to anyone is justice denied to everyone."

The rule of law is the shining light that distinguishes civilized society. Pace is devoted to realizing its wondrous powers to do good. Thus we recently started and also celebrate today the opening of our pioneering Community Practice Program to give our recent graduates valuable experience by providing legal representation, under excellent professional supervision, to those who otherwise could not afford it.

Pace has given me the opportunity to continue to serve and to serve with like- minded faculty who devote themselves and their students to eliminating many of life's injustices -- for example to prisoners, to immigrants, to women and to victims of racial and sexual preference discrimination, and to remedy societal ills such as unsustainable land use, severe threats to our natural environment and the urgent need for protecting our planet from the dreadful draughts, floods and fires emanating from climate change.

What a privilege it has been to be inspired in furthering environmental protection and justice by Professor Nicholas Robinson, the founder of our top rated environmental law program, who so successfully spreads the word on the need for sustainability to people in every corner of the world. Indeed he is in Brazil on that mission today.

At Pace I have had the privilege of helping to build on Dr. Mortola's ideals for this fine law school, to bring to Pace the Judicial Institute, the training center for all the judges of New York State, and most importantly to help educate the next generation of lawyers to be the leaders in advancing the cause of justice in our community, our country and the world. That is what it means to me to have my name on this building.