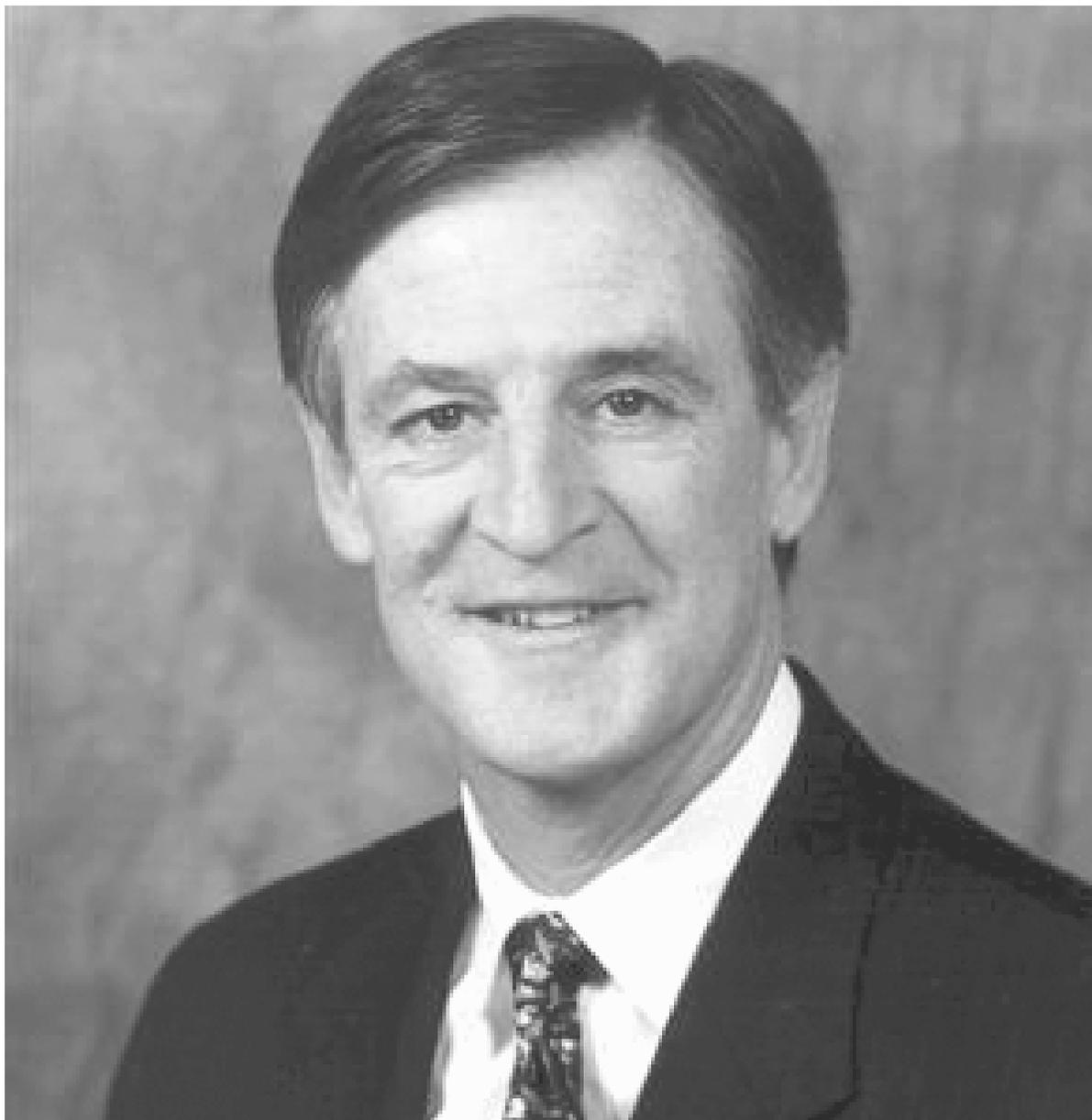


CHARLES STRAIN

Managing Partner, Farrell Fritz, P.C.

BY MAUREEN TRAXLER



The common thread of community service weaves its way through Charles Strain's personal life and professional career. Under Strain's leadership, Farrell Fritz financially supports scores of charitable organizations and participates in hundreds of events across Long Island annually. He is also active on the firm's pro bono committee, whose volunteers donate many hours of legal services to individuals and organizations that would otherwise be unable to afford representation. The committee serves, too, as a resource for companies seeking to start their own pro bono programs.

"The bulk of what we do at Farrell Fritz is representing individuals and companies in Long Island related matters," says Strain, "so it's important to be involved in our community, and encourage others to get involved." One of Long Island's largest law firms, Farrell Fritz has offices in Manhattan, and Nassau and Suffolk counties, reaching out to Bridgehampton and East Hampton on the East End.

Many of the nearly 80 attorneys at Farrell Fritz serve on one or multiple nonprofit boards and advisory committees, and take active roles in their communities. Farrell Fritz's partners, themselves, sit on some 50 boards. Although board members are not usually "visible" in the day-to-day operations of an organization, Strain says, "the nice thing about board activity is that you meet other committed

board members. The people that serve on boards bring certain skills that are helpful to the mission – often analytical skills that are put to work grappling with problems and helping nonprofits thrive. Board members also act as stewards for their communities, so they want to make sure that the financial circumstances of the entities are in good shape."

Giving back is part of the culture at Farrell Fritz, and its employees participate in walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons, races and other charitable endeavors. It's not uncommon to find one or more sign-up sheets posted around the office, encouraging employees to financially support their colleagues who are participating in events. The firm actively engages in food, blood, and toy drives and the U.S. Postal Service's "Operation Santa." The Farrell Fritz Ocean to Sound Relay, a 50-mile race from Jones Beach to Oyster Bay, attracts hundreds of runners and raises funds for local charities. Numerous employees and their family members joined the 12-hour overnight Relay for Life walk-a-thon in June benefiting the American Cancer Society.

As part of the firm's mentoring activity, Strain encourages young lawyers to assume a leadership role in nonprofit organizations. He has "matched" young lawyers with nonprofits whose missions seem to fit the attorney's personalities and passions, and he assures them that their involvement in lead-

ership positions can "affect change and bring positive outcomes."

Beyond his work experience, at the invitation of a friend, Strain joined other volunteers at the Leukemia Society in 1984, and served some 15 years on its board of directors, supporting the organization's research and patient aid programs. About the same time, he offered his assistance to the Family Service Association, and following its merger with Children's House, served as chairman of the board for the newly formed Family and Children's Association.

Strain acknowledges the difficult work done each day by the people at Family and Children's, adding, "...and they do it selflessly. You have to admire people who are so dedicated in such a tough environment." In addition to helping raise funds and introducing new people to the agency, Strain says, "Observing and working with the agency's executive director, Dick Dina, has been inspirational."

A member of the Council of Overseers of the Tilles Center for the Performing Arts, Strain has been part of the Center's growth and notes that Tilles brings "the best in music, dance and the arts to Long Island." He has recently joined St. John's University's board of governors and serves, too, on the board of directors of Winthrop-University Hospital, the Long Island Association, and the New York Charitable Asset Foundation. He has been honored by Family and Children's Association and the Tilles Center for his service.

"Getting involved with activities where people are doing good work in the community is fulfilling," says Strain, "and it has had a leavening effect on my life."

Strain received his Juris Doctor from St. John's University School of Law in 1977, and his Bachelor of Arts cum laude from Washington and Lee University. "Testing the water" in the public company arena, he helped form and worked in the legal department of Long Island Trust Company for several years before joining Farrell Fritz in 1984. He became a partner in 1986, and managing partner in 2000. Combining his interests in business and law, he concentrates his work in corporate, banking and real estate matters for large and small corporations and businesses. He also represents many financial institutions and serves as general counsel to closely-held corporations and not-for-profit organizations.

A high energy person, Strain enjoys practicing law, managing the firm, and continuing to be involved in community service. He welcomes responsibility, and says that his involvement in sports—as quarterback on his high school team and basketball point guard in college—helped him prepare to accept leadership roles when called upon.

In addition to the help he receives from his partners, he acknowledges his supportive wife Denise, whom he graciously says, "is the more talented lawyer in our family." Denise has served as the chief tax officer at Citibank, and is currently head of the tax function at Citigroup for all of their consumer and asset management businesses.

The couple has two daughters: Caitlin, a freshman at Brown University, and Alicia, a senior at Sacred Heart Academy. Strain, who coached a high school basketball team while in law school, also coached youth soccer and basketball teams for his daughters for a number of years. ■