

Friends Profile: Randal (Bob) Craft

Randal R. (Bob) Craft, Jr., was one of the founders of The Council of New York Law Associates (Lawyers Alliance for New York's original name) and has remained dedicated to pro bono work throughout his career. He is currently Of Counsel at Holland & Knight LLP.

Q. You were involved in the founding of The Council of New York Law Associates in 1969. What motivated you to become involved?

I met Neal Johnston, the primary founder, in the Lawyers for Lindsay mayoral campaign, where we were considering how to address the City's problems. This led to Neal meeting with Joe Korff, John Adler, and me in September 1969 to organize The Law Associates' League, whose name was quickly changed to The Council of New York Law Associates. The minutes of that foundational meeting and the other meetings that fall showed our interest in assertive public service and in escaping law firm isolation. These were exciting times, and being at the center of things when I succeeded Neal as Chairman of the Council in 1970 was a heady experience.

Q. Tell us about an early experience that best captures the spirit of the founders.

Our spirit was probably best reflected in the Council's growth, which was surprisingly fast and initially caused the establishment bar and law firm leadership to be concerned that we might be forming an associates union or a political organization. Our reputation grew, and we had no trouble attracting important speakers, including Senators, Supreme Court justices, Attorneys General, City officials, and activists like Ralph Nader and Gloria Steinem.

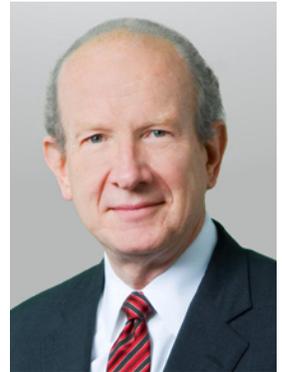
A specific event that received much national media coverage was the chartering of a train to Washington to lobby Congress to end the Viet Nam war. Although the Council was politically neutral, it facilitated the creation of and promoted events for the organization that arranged the charter, the Lawyers' Committee to End the War. Many hundreds of our members participated; not much associate work was done in the New York City law firms that day.

Q. How did your pro bono experiences influence your current work?

I started out organizing or monitoring various pro bono projects. In the early 70s I arranged for Neal and me to give New York City Ballet some assistance. A few years later I was hired on a paid basis to incorporate NYCB; I was then elected to the Board, became General Counsel, and stopped charging for my services. This role continues to dominate my work-life (and my so-called leisure time).

Q. Why do you feel it's important to provide ongoing support, including pro bono services and donations, to Lawyers Alliance?

Lawyers Alliance has unique expertise in identifying the clients and their needs and in helping its volunteers efficiently provide the needed legal services. As a bonus, this involvement is personally stimulating for the attorneys and strengthens the profession.



Randal (Bob) Craft

About

Employment includes:

Holland & Knight LLP

Haight, Gardner, Poor & Havens

Other activities include:

New York City Ballet –
Board of Directors;
Executive Committee;
Volunteer General Counsel

Wings Club Foundation –
General Counsel

Attending concerts, plays,
and dance performances

Graduate of:

J.D., Georgetown University
Law Center

B.S., Aerospace Engineering,
University of Texas, Austin

This profile is one in a series about people who have helped to build or been impacted by Lawyers Alliance for New York since 1969.