The following speech was delivered by ABA Treasurer Lucian T. Pera on the occasion of the presentation of the 2014 ABA Michael Franck Professional Responsibility Award posthumously to Jeanne P. Gray.

May 29, 2014
40th National Conference on Professional Responsibility
Long Beach, CA.

Last year in San Antonio, I was asked to say a few words about longtime ABA Center for Professional Responsibility Director Jeanne Gray as we opened this Conference.

We were still in shock at her untimely death a few weeks before; I know I was. About all we could do then was remember Jeanne, and her energy, and her intellect, and her deep love for the ABA and for our common history and work. We did that, and we honored her in the best way we knew – by having a wonderful 39th National Conference on Professional Responsibility. She would have loved that, and I also know how much she would have enjoyed being here with us to celebrate this current 40th installment. I know we all still miss her.

But we’re back this afternoon to do something more – to recognize her with the highest award we have, the Michael Franck Professional Responsibility Award, which honors a lifetime of achievement in the field of ethics and professional responsibility.

Flying into Long Beach, my only job here this afternoon was supposed to be to introduce my friend, ABA President-Elect William Hubbard of South Carolina, who would present the Franck award. But William had to cancel out at the last minute due to a more pressing engagement – the early birth – this morning, we hope – of his first grandchild. As we understand it, his daughter was being induced this morning, so we hope William is a now a granddaddy. William really, really wanted to be here, but, first things must come first, and I know that Jeanne would have been just horrified if he had missed the birth, especially on her account.

William has been a friend of the Center for a long time, and a friend of Jeanne’s for just as long. He would have told you how his and Jeanne’s paths first crossed more than 25 years ago when he served on the ABA Special Coordinating Committee on Professionalism.

He was going to remind you that it was Jeanne who led the drive years ago to create this award and to name it for Michael Franck. And he would have said to you that no one would have been happier to see her receive it today than Michael Franck, who deeply respected Jeanne and her work.

This award recognizes the highest level of excellence and accomplishment, over a career, in our critical field of ethics and professional responsibility. It was 20 years ago, almost to the day, when I learned who Michael Franck was, and why Jeanne wanted it
named for him. That was when the ABA presented the very first Michael Franck award to the man himself.

I happened to be there and I learned that Mike Franck was a veteran New York City disciplinary prosecutor, and eventually served as the long-time director of the State Bar of Michigan. He also spent a professional lifetime working in the ABA and elsewhere for improvement in lawyer regulation. He was the reporter to the ABA Clark Commission that, in 1970, produced vital reform recommendations. That work led to the 1973 establishment of the Standing Committee on Professional Discipline and to the 1978 creation of the Center for Professional Responsibility. For more than a decade, Mike Franck was a dominant voice in the ABA House of Delegates on regulation of the profession and legal ethics. He was there when it mattered, making a difference.

So it was perfectly fitting, twenty years ago, for the Center to name a lifetime achievement award in our field for Mike Franck, and it was fitting for him to be the first recipient. Still, it’s hard to conceive anyone, at any time, being a more perfect honoree than our own Jeanne Gray.

The awards that mean something – and this one does – are intended to recognize, honor, and pass on important parts of our tradition and culture — here, the highest traditions of excellence and of public and professional service in the field of professional responsibility. By honoring someone with this award, we say: This person is an example of our highest values; this person has honored these values for a lifetime; and this person is an example for all of us to follow, including those who will be here at the 50th and the 80th National Conferences.

I know that most all of you share my belief that ethics and professional responsibility is the most important thing the ABA does. It’s been that way since before any of us here were born. But the continued central role of the ABA in legal ethics was not inevitable. It’s just that, in retrospect, one woman’s leadership made it look that way.

Whether the rest of the world – or even the rest of the ABA – knows it or not, Jeanne Gray, more than any other single person, was responsible for the ABA’s continued, unquestioned leadership in our dynamically changing field. The ABA has been the indispensable force in the progress of professional responsibility and, over the last three decades, Jeanne was the indispensable woman guiding this force.

She began as bar counsel in Massachusetts, but by 1980 she came to the ABA as Regulation Counsel for the two-year-old Center for Professional Responsibility. She called her 33 years at the Center the “best gig” in America, and her love for her role and the Center was completely obvious to everyone who ever came in contact with her. And, shortly after she joined the ABA, Jeanne met her beloved husband, Paul Gallagher, who then worked in ABA Communications, intertwining her personal and family life even more tightly.

Her passion was for the ABA, for everything it did. First and foremost, though, her passion was for ethics and professional responsibility, and for the place that the ABA occupied in that world.

She had passion and warmth to spare for all the people of our field. Everyone who ever came into contact with Jeanne knew instantly of her love, for the staff of the Center,
committee members, every one of us who cared enough about ethics to come to the National Conference, and every stranger who ever wrote her an email about an ethics issue.

She also shared the view of everyone here today that ethics is fun. Serious fun, but still fun. Can't you all remember her laugh?

The force of her personality was overwhelming and her energy was limitless. William Hubbard recalled that you virtually never saw her anywhere, anytime without her notebook, clearly making a note of some new idea or comment or project that would surface again somewhere down the road.

She loved the ABA, but her love for ethics and professional responsibility was never provincial. She was the founding mother of the Association of Professional Responsibility Lawyers, some 24 years ago. We at APRL honored her with the first-ever Charles Kettlewell Legal Ethics Advisor Award a few years ago.

Outside our ethics world, ABA staff and leadership knew Jeanne very well as a gifted and wise counselor, a lawyer’s lawyer. Of course, her ethics family – after all, that’s what all of us here were to her – her ethics family was not a bit surprised that others relied so much on her advice.

Here at home in our world, over the last generation, there has been virtually no significant change in our field that did not bear Jeanne’s fingerprints, even if she was rarely the person credited in the press release. And they often bore more than just her fingerprints.


Her role varied, from initiator to catalyst to negotiator to sponsor to personnel director to champion—she did what needed to be done, when it was needed, and simply did not care who got the credit.

I can remember the National Conference in La Jolla, for example, where I personally saw Jeanne seize the moment offered by Professor Steve Gillers’s public comments on the MJP controversy to mobilize the ABA to form the MJP Commission. The results are now written into the law in the overwhelming majority of American jurisdictions.

And so, it is truly an honor and a privilege, on behalf of the ABA and the Center for Professional Responsibility, to ask Jeanne’s beloved daughter, attorney Brett Gallagher, to join me up here to accept, on behalf of her family, in honor of Jeanne Gray’s lifetime of work and leadership in ethics and professional responsibility, the 2014 Michael Franck Professional Responsibility Award.