



2009 Distinguished Service Award Recipient Irwin L. Treiger

By Dennis B. Drapkin*

The Section of Taxation honors Irwin L. Treiger as the 2009 recipient of its Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his outstanding career in the tax law and contributions to our profession and the Section.

Irwin L. Treiger of Seattle, Washington, is this year's recipient of the Section's Distinguished Service Award. In honoring Irwin, the Section recognizes his extraordinary professional, community service, and leadership accomplishments, and the aspirational standard he has set for all of us.

A native of Seattle, Irwin received his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Washington, graduating from law school first in his class, and serving as a member of the Order of the Coif and editor-in-chief of the law review. He then married Betty Lou, a fourth-generation Seattle resident. Irwin was required by his draft board to turn down a judicial clerkship with Justice William O. Douglas. Instead, he opted for an LL.M. at NYU, and again was first in his class, which included Jim Eustice. He soon returned to Seattle, where he has practiced law ever since.

Irwin's legal career began at Bogle & Gates, where he practiced for over 40 years, including 12 years as managing partner and chairman. (Irwin once identified the "worst moment" in his career as "my election as managing partner of my firm (the opportunity to serve as the firm's fireplug).") In 1999, he joined Dorsey & Whitney, and this past August moved to Stoel Rives. Irwin is a business lawyer, as well as an expert in estate planning, charitable giving, and non-profits. Much of his career has been devoted to assisting small businesses, helping them grow. Irwin is valued for his wisdom, insight and dedication. He inspires loyalty from clients, who often become close personal friends, and earns the confidence and respect of those who work with him.

As the Tax Section's first Vice Chair for Professional Services, Irwin worked to change the focus of Section Meetings to CLE. He chaired the Section from 1988-1989, served as the Section's delegate to the ABA House of Delegates from 1990-1996, and was a member of the ABA Board of Governors for three years. He has also chaired the Tax Section of the Washington State Bar Association and the National Conference of Lawyers and CPAs. Irwin helped organize the ABA Tax Section's Second Invitational Conference on Income Tax Compliance, held in 1988, and chaired the Section's Public Outreach Task Force in 1999-2000. He has been a leader in addressing issues relating to lawyers practicing in a multidisciplinary setting and the practice of law by accounting firms.

This brief summary of Irwin's legal career might suggest that it consumed all of his time. That is far from accurate. Irwin has been and remains a major contributor to Seattle civic endeavors, inevitably in a leadership role and often at a critical juncture in the organization's existence. He has served as chair of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and the Seattle Foundation, as trustee of the Samis Foundation, and as a trustee of Seattle Rotary and president of the Seattle Rotary Service Foundation. During Irwin's tenure as chair of the Chamber of Commerce, Seattle hosted the first meeting of the Asian Pacific Economic Conference, which was attended by the heads of state of almost all of the Asian Pacific countries, including President Clinton. He served as head of the King County Baseball Park Commission and was instrumental in having a new stadium built, which, among many other efforts by Irwin, helped keep the Mariners baseball team in Seattle.

Irwin's service to Seattle baseball was honored when he tossed the ceremonial first pitch at Safeco Field on his 70th birthday. Irwin has worked tirelessly to help provide Seattle's major arts organizations with leadership and adequate financial support. He chaired a panel appointed by Seattle's mayor to address the Seattle Symphony's severe financial crisis in the 1980s. Most of the panel's recommendations were implemented, and the Symphony was able to avoid bankruptcy. He subsequently led the Corporate Council for the Arts of Puget Sound, the Seattle Symphony Foundation and the Cornish College of the Arts (which he also successfully helped through serious financial difficulties). Irwin has long been a leader of the Seattle Jewish community and served as president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle.

Irwin's public service continues. Two years ago he agreed to head up efforts to reform the state of Washington's tax system, and he serves as chairman of the Tax Reform Steering Committee of the Puget Sound Regional Council's Prosperity Partnership. This group's tax reform recommendations are still being actively debated.

Irwin's community service has not gone unrecognized. In connection with Irwin's receiving the Benjamin Cardozo Award for Outstanding Service, Washington Governor Gary Locke proclaimed May 28, 1997, as "Irwin Treiger Day." In 1999, his law school classmate, former speaker of the House of Representatives Thomas S. Foley, presented Irwin with the University of Washington Law School's Distinguished Alumnus Award.

No article about Irwin would be complete without mentioning his beloved cigars. There he is, a phone in one hand and a very large cigar in the other, various papers spread out on his lap, his attaché case nearby, doing good for the community. One reporter described him as a "cigar-chomping, baseball-loving tax attorney." ■

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