

LEE S. MICHAELS
Class of 1967

Lee Michaels always seems to be a man on the go, whether conducting a civil trial, mentoring lawyers, supporting his law school and his community, or running marathons. His nominator aptly described him as “tireless.”

Lee has spent most of his life in Central New York, where he was born and raised. A 1962 graduate of Cornell University, Lee served two years in the U.S. Navy as a gunnery officer in the Pacific Fleet, including service as hostilities began off the coast of Vietnam in 1964. Then the College of Law got a hold of him and he graduated *magna cum laude* as a member of the Order of the Coif and the Justinian Honorary Law Society. Lee was also an associate editor of the *Syracuse Law Review* and active in the Moot Court Honor Society. Specializing in tort law for five decades with the Auburn firm now known as Michaels & Smolak, it is as if he never really left the College of Law. He has been a constant supporter, giving freely of his time, knowledge, and resources, serving many roles: adjunct professor of trial practice; volunteer coach of moot court teams; treasurer, vice president, and president of the Syracuse University Law Alumni Association; and vice chair of the law school’s Board of Visitors. Deservingly, Lee was the 2007 recipient of the College of Law’s distinguished service award.

Devoting his career to obtaining compensation for his clients for personal injury, wrongful death, and professional liability, Lee has tried thousands of cases and won or obtained countless verdicts and settlements. He is a master of his craft, having been certified by several national organizations for having the highest levels of legal skills, competency, and achievement. He has lead local and regional bar associations, and is recognized as a Director Emeritus of the New York State Trial Lawyers Association and Member of the New York State Academy of Trial Lawyers. Needless to say, he is a sought-after CLE speaker around the state.

Outside of the legal profession, Lee always finds time to support his community, as President of the Cayuga County United Way, member of the Board of Directors of the New York State United Way, member of Hospice of Finger Lakes, and past president of his synagogue.

A 1979 issue of the Syracuse Track Club News, found online, listed Lee as one of several area runners competing in the Boston Marathon that year, just one of the hundreds of events in a lifetime of being in motion. (And he finished that marathon in a time of 3 hours 15 minutes!)

Lee’s nominator says it well: “Lee takes his responsibility as an advocate for the injured very seriously, he has a sense of compassion and caring for others, he is an extremely loyal friend, and he has a deep sense of pride in his Syracuse law degree.”

It is most fitting we bestow upon him this honor on this fiftieth anniversary of his graduation.

*In recognition of his distinguished career and commitment to his profession and his community,
Syracuse University College of Law is proud to honor
Lee S. Michaels with the Syracuse Law Honors Medal.*