

As seen in

Mann About Town

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Cohen & Perfetto LLP
Rising To The Challenge In Work And Life
Marshall J. Cohen

Whether attending Amputee Coalition of America yearly events, hitting tennis balls or in the thick of a \$123 million real estate transaction, Marshall J. Cohen, a founding partner of the real estate law firm Cohen & Perfetto, always gives 100 percent.

His successes have been numerous. In 1961 Cohen graduated *summa cum laude* from Rutgers University and received his Ph.D. in American History from Harvard. He has served on the history faculty at both Harvard and MIT, and he also taught the Real Estate Transactions course at Columbia Law School for three years while in an active real estate practice.

After many years of teaching history, he began his legal career in the real estate department of Fried Frank, where he represented major foreign institutions, and eventually moved on to become a co-managing partner at his former law firm where he co-chaired the real estate practice with Louis A. Perfetto.

In 2005, Cohen, along with Perfetto and Jennifer C. Padnick, is a founding partner of Cohen & Perfetto LLP, a boutique real estate law firm with clients nationwide. The firm is a unique specialty law firm that provides solid legal and business recommendations to clients from the smallest business to Fortune 500 companies.

Cohen, born with a deformed and enlarged right leg and hip, faced daily challenges as he went through operations, months of physical therapy and an array of orthopedic walking supplements. Yet he never gave up his quest to succeed. He was inspired to double his efforts putting himself on a continuous path to self-improvement.

In sports, the name of the game was tennis. Jerry, Cohen's older brother was an avid A-team tennis player, and as with many siblings there was a friendly competition. At the age of 50, despite his shortcomings, Cohen pushed himself to become the best tennis player that his body would allow.

"I knew I had it in my genes to be the best," Cohen commented, "But not in my body."

Though he was never able to reach the same playing level as his brother, Cohen went beyond anyone's expectations and learned to play the game very well.

Through the 1990's his physical condition worsened, and he was told that he might end up in a wheelchair much sooner than anyone had anticipated. Cohen spoke to several doctors about his situation in what seemed like a never ending search to find a way out of a two-wheel life.

Eventually Cohen met Dr. Joseph Lane and Dr. Eric Schaffer who suggested that Cohen have his right leg amputated and start using a computerized artificial limb. The state-of-the-art artificial limb would have a computerized knee that would read sensors in the foot, and would need to be plugged in every night to

function.

There were risks in this path, and Cohen was skeptical, so he and Perfetto met with Paddy Rossbach.

Rossbach, an amputee, is the president of the Amputee Coalition of America, an organization that reaches out to educate, support and advocate for those with limb loss. This meeting along with the support of family and friends convinced Cohen that he was ready for the surgery and a new way of life.

On September 11, 2003, Cohen underwent the operation, and one month later started using his C leg. He has never looked back, and is now more mobile than before the surgery.

Cohen attributes a part of his final decision to have the operation to Rossbach and the ACA.

“Paddy showed me that there was a better way of life, and that I wasn’t the only one who had to make this decision. I had a community, a support system with the ACA, in addition to the tremendous support of my wife, Jeannie, and my business partner, Louis Perfetto,” Cohen said.

With his mobility regained after surgery, Cohen joined the board of directors at the ACA and has since been a strong supporter of the organization. Most notably, he has helped the ACA lobby for more equitable insurance coverage for prostheses through state legislation for now, and eventually through federal pre-emptive legislation. Cohen was even honored, along with Dr. Joseph Lane, by the ACA in October of 2006 for his commitment to the organization. At a dinner held at the Harvard Club of New York, more than 100 family, friends, clients and fellow amputees joined to say thank you and raise more than \$75,000 for the ACA and its programs.

Cohen maintains that the only way to be involved in an organization is to be completely committed. Through the years Cohen has worked with several groups often oriented to the Jewish faith. Through college and graduate school he was involved with Hillel, where he acted as Cantor for High Holiday services. Later he became a member of the board of directors for the American Friends of the Open University of Israel, and in 1996, Cohen received its Max Rowe Educational Leadership Award for his outstanding leadership and generosity. He was heavily involved in the organization and its efforts until 2003.

At the age of 65, when most professionals think of ways to wind down and relax, Cohen decided to start again with something new, a law firm.

In a world of “megafirms,” Cohen and his two partners, Perfetto and Padnick, decided to form a law firm where clients could find partner level service all the time on every deal, where all aspects of a client’s real estate business would be analyzed and where added value would be the ultimate goal.

As a notorious perfectionist in his life and his work, it was important to Cohen, as well as to his partners, to emphasize the level of work done in the new firm and the overall satisfaction of the client. Cohen & Perfetto creates the personalized atmosphere of a small firm while still adding value to every transaction like the best large firm.

“We have worked to create a central place for all of our client’s real estate needs,” said Cohen, “In our firm, they can find everything they need to make every real estate transaction successful.”

A review of the most recent transactions—often nationwide and high dollar— and the client list show that they have accomplished this goal. The client list ranges from small to big and includes names like Clear Channel Spectacolor, Helmsley Spear, High Desert Investment Group, Kimco Realty, Public Storage, and Storage Deluxe.

“Loyal clients have followed us through the years, even when we moved and created the new firm,” commented Cohen.

As a partner of C&P, Cohen specializes in development, acquisition, sales, conveyancing, retail, office and ground leasing, and financing, representing both foreign and domestic institutions in acquisition programs and individual investors and developers in their real estate transactions. Cohen & Perfetto is a full service real estate law firm. To find more information on the firm please visit the website at www.cohenperfetto.com.

Cohen resides in Manhattan with his wife of 12 years, Jean Keh. He recently became a grandfather for the second time with the birth of Ruby Alana Keh on January 30, 2007. His first granddaughter, Lila Estelle Cohen, was born on April 1, 2006. Although he is still as committed as ever to the firm and its success, you will often find him taking a little time out of his busy day to help baby-sit for the two newest joys in his life.

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