

Meet Your SCBA Colleague

Frederick Eisenbud, a Commack environmental law and litigation attorney, worked for the U.S. Dept. of Justice before joining the Suffolk County District Attorney's office. His career has been anything but routine.

By Laura Lane

Was there an event or person that led you to pursue the type of law you've chosen? My criminal procedure teacher at Hofstra Law School inspired me to become a prosecutor. That class is usually presented by someone who is liberal - everyone is wrongly convicted. This teacher, having been a prosecutor, presented everything more neutrally.

How did you end up working at the Dept. of Justice? After graduating from law school I was appointed by the U.S. Attorney General to the Honor Law Graduate Program at the Dept. of Justice in Washington, D.C. I was assigned to the Criminal Division, Appellate Section of the Department.

What did you handle at the Dept. of Justice? I wrote and argued appeals from cases arising out of Strike Forces in five different federal circuits, prepared memoranda in opposition to petitions for writs of certiorari to the United States Supreme Court and I assisted in the preparation of a number of briefs to the Supreme Court in cases that were accepted for review.

That sounds very fulfilling. Why come to Suffolk County? I grew up in Rockville Centre. But it was my wife, Lynne Adair Kramer, who had always wanted to open her own practice on Long Island. I was happy to come back to Long Island but really knew nothing about Suffolk County - I thought it was all farmland. We chose Suffolk County over Nassau because we both loved to play tennis and wanted a house with a tennis

court. I did get an offer from both the Nassau and Suffolk District Attorney's office.

You accepted the job as an Assistant District Attorney in Suffolk County. What was that like for you? When I came to Suffolk County I wanted a job with the U.S. Attorney's Office but I was turned down because I didn't have the experience needed.

It was an ego adjustment going from the Justice Dept. to the local DA's office. But at the Justice Dept. the cases were from all over. At the DA's office everything was local. It was a much more personal experience than working for the Justice Dept. and I got to know people in Suffolk County.

How did you end up working environmental cases? In 1983 I got a complaint about a furniture stripper who was dumping chemicals. We got the guy. I started and became the first chief of the Environmental Crime Unit in the State of New York at a local level. For three years I was the only DA prosecuting environmental crime full-time. And I had the first two jail sentences for environmental crime in New York. I was ahead of the learning curve.

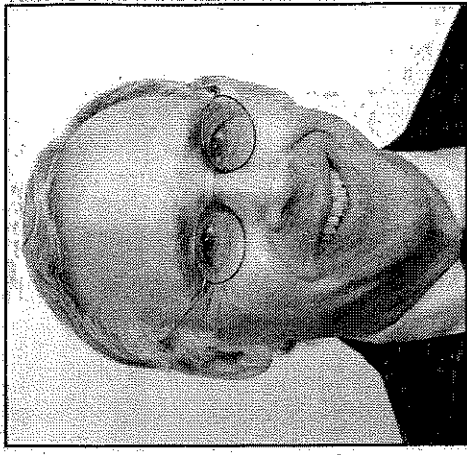
What were the challenges at that time? I had to convince the judges that environmental crime should be treated the same as DWI. They were all white collar criminals that had never been in trouble before. By contaminating ground water they affected thousands of people. We had more convictions in Suffolk County from 1984 to 1987 than the attorney generals.

You accomplished even more to help protect the environment at your next job, the Suffolk County Attorney's Office, right? I was the Deputy Chief of the Federal and Civil Litigation Bureau and was Counsel to the Suffolk County Board of Health. I helped write ground water protection regulations. Then when I went into private practice three years later at Cahn Wishod & Lamb (Lamb & Barnosky, LLP now) I handled their environmental and municipal litigation. Eight years later I left to start my own practice, but I returned to Lamb & Barnosky in 2005 to head their Environmental Practice Group.

But soon you decided to open your own practice again. I developed their practice and became a partner. It was a tough decision to leave in 2008. I wanted to accept all categories of environmental cases but I couldn't do that at Lamb & Barnosky because of conflicts of interest with the firm's municipal clients.

What do you like about being an environmental law attorney? I love what I do because I feel like I'm always learning something new. Environmental Law is a field that is constantly evolving. I also love it because I can help people.

When and why did you join the SCBA? I joined in 1978. It was the way to have a collegial relationship with others and a way to give back to the legal community. I felt I had skills to share with people and one way was through the committees at the SCBA. I was the co-chair of the Environmental Committee seven different times and I was also a past member of the Board of Directors. I lecture for the



Frederick Eisenbud

Academy annually.

You've published, were the Editor-in-Chief for the Academy of Law's Law Review, and lecture. Why do you continue to lecture? I enjoy it. I believe lawyers have an obligation to share their skills with other lawyers so they can get good at what they do. I was also an adjunct professor at Touro Law which was an interesting experience. It really forces you to learn your subject matter. And I like the fact that it forced me to keep current in my field.

Why would you recommend SCBA membership to another attorney? The committee system at the SCBA is a wonderful way to get to know your fellow lawyers. The interaction you'll experience will enhance your practice. And being an SCBA member will give you a level of comfort to know you can call other lawyers so you don't have to reinvent the wheel.