

Every year, the law firm of Covington & Burling publishes a booklet of pro bono work engaged by their attorneys. Anne Proctor is Pro Bono Counsel for the law firm. She and Robert had a close working relationship and had become good friends. Anne is now a close, personal friend of mine.

Anne Proctor
9/17/06

Robert Wone Overview of Pro Bono Work

Through his pro bono projects, Robert worked tirelessly to harness his legal talents in support of his commitments to social causes. A good example was his pro bono work for the **Museum of Chinese in the Americas (MoCA)**. Robert led a team of Covington attorneys to successfully negotiate a lease in Lower Manhattan for MoCA, the first full-time, professionally-staffed museum dedicated to reclaiming, preserving, and interpreting the history and culture of Chinese and their descendants in the Western hemisphere. After 9/11, MoCA saw a dramatic increase in its museum visitors. It launched a campaign to increase its space for exhibit galleries, a bookstore, offices, and multi-purpose rooms at a new location, essentially expanding its existing space by five times. At the signing of the lease, Executive Director and co-founder Charles Lai stated "This is a landmark moment for MoCA. It was apparent a long time ago that the Museum's work had outgrown its space, yet it was very important to us that, should we expand, the space be in Lower Manhattan where so many immigrant stories began. The Board and staff are so thrilled at the outcome of our search. This new home for MoCA is a place where we can build a world-class, national museum with the expertise and incredible talent of none other than Maya Lin. We are truly excited about this collaboration and the possibilities in programming and exhibiting that a larger space affords us."

Robert provided real estate and housing advice to many other of the firm's pro bono clients, including the **Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center, Organization of Chinese Americans, Inc.** (a civil rights advocacy group), **The Latin American Youth Center, D.C. Children's Advocacy Center, the Children's Defense Fund, Pyramid Atlantic** (a nonprofit arts center), **Community Connections** (a nonprofit mental health case management agency), **Byte Back, Inc.** (a nonprofit that trains underprivileged adults to develop computer skills for technology jobs), and the **Campaign 4 Youth Justice**. Among his work for LAYC was negotiation of the lease in the Avalon Theater where LAYC opened a Ben & Jerry's ice cream parlor as a work experience program for its inner city client base. Robert also assisted LAYC in refinancing its real estate and with the contracts for construction of its Art House.

He represented indigent tenants in housing disputes with their landlords. He contributed to the firm's production of an intake training manual used by lawyers in Tennessee to advise hurricane evacuees from the Gulf Coast region regarding laws relevant to their losses, in particular their housing-related issues.

Robert was also an expert in employment law. He offered employment-related advice to the **Washington Humane Society, Hadassah** (a nonprofit that offers health, social welfare and educational programs for its members and others in the Washington, D.C. area Jewish community), **Byte Back, Inc.**, and the **National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development**.

On several occasions, Robert spent his weekend hours doing volunteer work. For example, Robert recently joined other Covington attorneys and staff to renovate the home of an indigent DC resident in Northeast DC through the nonprofit **Rebuilding Together With Christmas in April of Washington, D.C., Inc.** (He helped Rebuilding Together to negotiate the complexities of receiving a gift of valuable real estate in Maryland.) Robert and his wife, Kathy, spent one Saturday with **Cardozo Senior High School** students refurbishing an abandoned school office that became the space for the Cardozo Legal Clinic. This volunteering was but a small part of the work Robert did for the students at Cardozo. Robert was instrumental in Covington & Burling's advice and efforts in assisting Cardozo in setting up and operating this legal clinic, one of the few high school clinics in the country. Robert helped staff the clinic and prepare a manual for other C&B attorneys who staff the clinic.

Robert gave generously of his time to countless Covington staff employees who sought his legal counsel on a variety of issues, including housing. Because he was very approachable, willing to give of his time to others, and knowledgeable in many facets of law, during his tenure at C&B Robert naturally became the attorney to whom staff employees most often turned for personal legal advice. No matter how busy he was responding to client demands, Robert would always find the time to assist others in the office.

For the **Organization of Chinese Americans, Inc.**, the national group which promotes the interests of Asian Americans, Robert served as pro bono outside general counsel, advising the organization in matters of corporate governance, commercial contracts, employment and the like.

Robert often negotiated leases for pro bono clients of C&B, including a recent office lease for the **International Law Institute**.