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LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

## CARL LOBELL

RETIRED PARTNER OF WEIL, GOTSHAL & MANGES

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BY IRA M. MILLSTEIN

When I first met Carl Lobell, I liked him immediately. It was 1965, and he was a lawyer at the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice. He had come to Weil to interview with me to be an associate at our firm. We had contacts in common, since I, too, had previously been in the Antitrust Division.

I remember to this day being struck by his attitude and intellect. For me, first impressions are often correct, and that was certainly the case here: Everyone trusts and likes Carl. He is adept, brilliant and analytical and, throughout his career, he has demonstrated a capacity to solve some of the most complex legal and financial questions.

And, yet, he is so much more than your “average” extremely successful lawyer. His passion for art is unmatched. He is an expert in the field, with a focus on up-and-coming artists, and has given major works of art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and also to MOMA and The Whitney. A dedicated father to his two children, he is now a proud and devoted grandfather. He continues to be the most well-dressed lawyer I have ever known.

Luckily, for us, he did decide to join Weil the year we met. He went on to become a key figure in the firm, supporting our growth in terms of mentoring, production, participating in management, including as co-chair of the litigation practice, and handling some of the most important matters we ever had.

He was at the forefront of consumer finance law, advising industry giants such as JC Penney, GE Capital and GMAC on the implementation of the Truth in Lending Act, passed by Congress in 1968. He soon became the go-to attorney for these companies, overseeing nationwide defense of class action litigation—then in its infancy—relating to the way they extended and collected credit.

A superb litigator and regulatory lawyer, he also applied himself to developing a corporate practice. For more than 30 years, he served as a primary advisor to GE Capital, providing counsel on its myriad financing arms and then moving into M&A, overseeing its deals throughout the Americas and Europe. Seeing first-hand the benefits of having an international footprint and cross-border capabilities, he was integral to Weil’s expansion, helping to establish our offices in Europe.

He was instrumental in bringing to Weil its first African American attorney and first woman attorney. He has continued throughout



his career to advocate for diversity. He mentored countless Weil attorneys, including Nancy Barton, who was a partner at Weil

and then went on to become the first woman general counsel of GE Capital. At GE Capital’s request, he counseled other upcoming lawyers and business people throughout their business units. GE Capital’s leadership recognized Carl’s deep knowledge of their business, and they came to him for assistance in refining their skills, expanding their expertise, and enhancing their careers.

When my former classmate, Jack Greenberg, the Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, who served as co-counsel with Thurgood Marshall on *Brown v. Board of Education*, called in the mid-1960s to ask if we could help on a pro bono matter in Selma, Alabama, I brought in Carl who was anxious to help. He had volunteered to oversee the registration of voters in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana when he was at the Justice Department. As Jack had requested, Carl returned to Selma to represent the Southwest Alabama Farmers’ Cooperative Association (SWAFCA), set up by veterans of the Selma civil rights marches to represent African American farmers’ interests. He became known in Selma while working on this case, and was not welcome in the town. Turned away from the hotel where he had made a reservation, he ended up sleeping in the SWAFCA warehouse. He, with me, asserted a novel antitrust claim based on the boycott of the African American farmers’ produce. It successfully caused large company purchasers to end the boycott. Carl went on to similar activities for the NAACP.

Carl has had an extraordinary career, impacting so many of us for the better. He redefined excellence in the practice of law, demonstrating to attorneys that we could be much more than simply outside legal advisors, but could be true business partners and advisors to our clients. He also showed us all that it is equally important to be responsible citizens and contributors to our society.

I can’t think of anyone more deserving of Lifetime Achievement recognition than Carl, and I offer my sincerest congratulations to my long-time partner and friend.

*Ira M. Millstein is senior partner at Weil, Gotshal & Manges.*