

To some, a law firm is a law firm is a law firm, groups of attorneys who are largely indistinguishable from one another. In fact, each law firm has its own culture and unique personality, typically shaped by the attorneys who founded and grew it.

The senior attorneys at Post Polak established what was originally called Irwin & Post in 1970 and grew it into the firm it is today, adding attorneys over the years with similar outlooks and values. Each of the senior attorneys had his own formative experiences, which led to his own set of passions and life experiences. Individually, each has his own story, which has informed the arc of his career and allowed him to become the kind of lawyer and professional he is today. Collectively, the stories of John Post, Fred Polak, Bob Goodsell and Steve Rother have molded Post Polak into a distinctive practice and continue to help point it toward the future. In addition, lawyers tend to join the kind of practice where they can relate to those in the lead. Because Post Polak's leaders have had interesting career paths and have demonstrated interest in a broad array of pursuits, those who have come after them are, similarly, interesting – and interested – individuals.

Paul Strauchler, a leader of the firm for many years, died far too early, in 2018, but was, like his colleagues, a distinctively interesting individual.

Each of our senior leaders has a uniquely fascinating story to tell. We are pleased to share them with you.

# JOHN N. POST

John Post's formative experiences occurred in Puerto Rico and Vietnam. Due to his father's job, John spent the first 11 years of his life growing up in Villa Caparra, Puerto Rico. When his family moved to New Jersey, he spoke Spanish as fluently as English and, in some ways, identified as a Latino. To this day, John is fluent in Spanish.

John took part in the Marine Corps PLC program and was commissioned a second lieutenant when he graduated from St. Peter's College. His active duty was deferred so that he could attend law school and serve as a legal officer. After his law school graduation, he went on active duty, initially at Quantico for the officer training program required of all USMC commissioned officers, and he was eventually sent to Vietnam, serving in Danang during the Tet Offensive. John describes his three years as a JAG officer in the Marines Corps as "among the most professionally gratifying years of my life." Just a year out of Georgetown University Law Center, he was given tremendous responsibility, including trying courts martial involving murder, rape and drugs. When John returned to the States, he was offered a chance to make a life in the military, which he declined. He also interviewed at the largest law firms in New Jersey but decided to pursue his own practice, realizing that he had already experienced more substantial litigation than most of the attorneys who were interviewing him.



John established what is now Post Polak with his colleague, Charles J. Irwin, in 1970, in Mountainside. Weeks later, when Irwin became New Jersey's first Director of the Office of Consumer Protection, John took on their entire practice, including the role of municipal attorney for Mountainside, a position he still holds (making him, arguably, the longest serving municipal attorney currently in New Jersey). Representing Mountainside, John conducted ground-breaking litigation against other local governments, regional authorities and the State of New Jersey, and began building what is today the firm's local government law practice. John has focused on substantial litigation and transactional matters for both private and public sector clients. Among his notable accomplishments, he has negotiated contracts for a head coach in the NFL and tried a nationally televised divorce case against a former governor of the State of New Jersey.

# FREDERICK B. POLAK

Fred Polak, long-time Managing Partner of Post Polak, grew up as a “typical American kid” in the suburbs of New York City. That was not necessarily the obvious path, since he was one of the first Jewish children born in Europe after the horrors of the Holocaust. In fact, Fred’s origin story is anything but typical. He was born to parents who met and fell in love in the Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps – and survived. When he was liberated, Fred’s father weighed 75 lbs. and had typhus. Fred’s parents – among the 10% of Dutch Jews who survived the camps – married, returned to Amsterdam and several years later, emigrated to the U.S. A documentary film, “Steal a Pencil for Me,” chronicled Jack Polak and Ina Soep’s incredibly improbable courtship (under the watchful gaze of Jack’s first wife, who occupied the same barracks).

As Fred grew up, his father and mother – who lived to the age of 102 and 91, respectively – never focused on their wartime experiences, but his father, who was an acquaintance of Anne Frank’s father, Otto, founded and headed The Anne Frank Foundation in the U.S. Fred’s aunt, who was in the Underground during the war, was instrumental in getting Anne Frank’s diary published. In their later years, Fred’s parents gave hundreds of lectures about their concentration camp experiences, with the theme that intolerance and discrimination can never be countenanced. Subsequently, Fred, too, joined the Foundation’s board and provided pro bono legal counsel; he now also speaks publicly about the Holocaust.



A Division III tennis player, Fred still considers himself a tennis fanatic, continuing to play many times a week and competing in tournaments.

Fred heads the firm’s litigation practice after a number of years as a federal prosecutor. With close to 40 years of litigation experience, Fred has tried numerous cases before juries and has extensive bench trial experience as well. He concentrates his practice in shareholder/partnership disputes and employment matters, as well as general corporate and commercial litigation. He also assists the firm’s clients in regulatory compliance matters when litigation is a possibility.

# ROBERT A. GOODSSELL

After practicing law for 40 years, the thoughts of most lawyers in their 60s turn to golf and vacations. If you know Bob Goodsell, it does not come as much of a shock that his thoughts instead turned to joining the Peace Corps and volunteering to serve in rural Tanzania.

Says Bob, “After graduating from the University of Michigan Law School, I didn’t know what I wanted, but I knew I did not want ‘big law.’” He joined Post Polak in 1979 and built a successful transactional practice, closing substantial matters for the firm’s institutional and corporate clients. He served as General Counsel to Morristown Municipal Airport and General Counsel to the Warren Township Sewerage Authority.



Throughout his legal career, Bob has always been interested in finding ways to give back to his community. He started with volunteer work for the American Civil Liberties Union. Several years after his own two daughters had gone to what had been Montclair’s public pre-kindergarten program, and when public funding for pre-K ended, Bob helped create the non-profit Montclair Early Childhood Corporation (MECC), which now operates the community’s pre-K program that serves 3- and 4-year-olds. He served on the Board for nine years, and as its legal counsel for 15 years. Bob helped form several 501(c)3 organizations in Montclair, including Imani, which offers educational services to minority students in that community. Bob became assistant girls’ volleyball coach at Montclair High School and helped to start a boys’ team.

Several years after his daughters attended Girl Scout camp on Eagle Island in Upstate New York, Bob became a driving force behind the Friends of Eagle Island, whose mission was to re-open the camp after the Girl Scouts decided to close it and sell the island with no assurance that it would remain a youth camp. Bob’s efforts included a four-year litigation, and, though the Friends did not win their main argument, they were ultimately successful in keeping the camp, in part thanks to a \$2.45 million donation with which to purchase the camp from the Girl Scouts. This summer Eagle Island has girl overnight campers from the first time since 2008, thanks in part to Bob’s efforts.

When a friend suggested the Peace Corps to Bob, he embraced the idea enthusiastically, even though he was decades older than the average volunteer, did not speak Swahili, the national language, and had no particular expertise in agriculture, the sector in which he served. His time spent in Tanzania was not without its bumps, but he says it gave him a “greater appreciation of humanity,” and he has since become a board member of Friends of Tanzania, whose primary goal is to “identify and fund worthy development projects in community development, education, public health and the environment within Tanzania that will positively impact the lives of underserved Tanzanians in a manner consistent with the culture and values of those communities.”

Bob observes that Post Polak has long placed a high value on doing good, both as attorneys and in other ways. He adds, “I feel I need to be making a difference in people’s lives. Post Polak allowed me to do that, both as a lawyer and by supporting my activities outside the firm.” And as for his decision to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in rural Tanzania in his late 60’s, as Bob’s daughter, Stef, who knows him well, observed: “When Dad goes, he goes big.”

# STEVEN C. ROTHER

At age 81, Steve Rother states matter-of-factly, “I don’t know what I want to be when I grow up” – and he means it. A serial entrepreneur, his professional life has been as wide and varied as his personal passions.

Steve’s path after graduating from Rutgers University School of Law was hardly conventional. Early in his career, Steve was a Superior Court Judge’s law clerk, an Assistant Corporation Counsel and Tax Collector for the City of Newark. He was responsible for computerizing the city’s tax collection system, the first municipality in the State to do so. He was, as General Counsel, responsible for the legal department of the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority, the state’s largest combined housing and redevelopment agency. He moved on to become President and Chief Operating Officer of Related Mortgage Corporation, which was responsible for the financing of a wide variety of multifamily and healthcare projects throughout the country. Later, Steve was, in turn, President of Peregrine Mortgage Company and Love Funding Corporation, the nation’s oldest mortgage company, and then General Counsel for Care One, a long-term care provider. He owned a healthcare facility for 23 years. It was not until 2003 that Steve joined Post Polak as a principal.



For the past six years, Steve has also served as Executive Director of the Essex County Improvement Authority, which provides public/private financing and owns and operates the Essex County Airport and Newark-based parking facilities. He also served as Village Counsel for South Orange for a number of years.

Steve has had to reduce his mountain climbing in recent years. But he is currently rebuilding – for the third time – his 1955 Chris-Craft mahogany runabout. He also rebuilt his first car, not surprising for someone who put himself through college and law school as an auto mechanic. In his undergraduate “spare time,” Steve had been a federally licensed firearms dealer and produced a live recording of a locally popular musician.

Steve says, “I’m a storyteller.” Over the years, he was encouraged to commit his stories to paper, so he recently published a book, “Adirondack Camp Life: Reflections of a Lifelong Camper,” in which he shows how growing up in the Adirondacks helped forge his identity. His next literary venture is a murder mystery.

That rebuilt Chris-Craft will come in handy; Steve’s home on Lake Placid is accessible only by water.