

Remarks
Ricki Helfer
Chairman
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

FDIC Awards Ceremony

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I do not know about you, but every time I walk into this room I still am struck by the view that we have from here. We can be justly proud of this view -- a view that suggests visually the high regard in which the FDIC has been -- and continues to be -- held. We are in the center of things.

From the very beginning of our organization until today, we at the FDIC have never had to doubt why we are here. As I said here last year, we are the only banking agency created by popular demand. Today, we remain the agency closest to the people and to their day-to-day concerns.

Leo Crowley, FDIC Chairman from 1934 to 1945 and the man who built this organization into what it remains today, stated concisely our reason for being, 60 years ago, when he said: "There can be no justification for the shameful fact that during the thirteen-year period from 1921 to 1933 inclusive, 16,800 of this country's banks ceased operation because of financial difficulties."

And Crowley said: "no nation, no State, and no community can long withstand such a continuous seepage of its wealth; nor can any people be expected to bear placidly the suffering and bewilderment of having its funds, whether working capital or savings, disappear through the workings of economic forces that are difficult to understand."

It is no exaggeration to say that the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation saved the banking system of our country 60 years ago, and in doing so it saved the country from financial chaos and probable social upheaval. With great reason, the FDIC has been lauded as the most successful program of the New Deal.

More recently, and just as significantly, the FDIC prevented the banking crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s from ending in catastrophe -- for many of us here today, those memories are still very fresh. As those events again remind us, the safety and soundness of banks influences the economy. That influence is substantial, direct, and often immediate. Therefore, our efforts to strengthen the safety and soundness of banks are aimed, not just at protecting the insurance funds, nor protecting the depositor -- as important as those goals are -- our efforts also keep our

economy stable and strong -- making our country the kind of place where people can live with a sense of security. It is a noble purpose and one that we, as an organization, have served proudly for three generations. By what we do here, each one of us contributes in some way to that purpose. Not many people in this town -- or anywhere else, for that matter -- can honestly say that their occupation serves the American people so directly or so well.

Most of America looks at that sticker on the bank's door with confidence, but we look at it with pride. Confidence is what we deliver -- day after day, month after month, year after year. The men and women of the FDIC will continue to deliver as we always have. We have a sixty-year tradition of public service to uphold. Three generations of Americans have built their lives on that tradition of public service -- and that is more of a tribute to you and your colleagues than anything I could say.

Even in an exemplary group, some people stand out as examples to others.

Michael H. Nelson is one such person. Michael Nelson personifies dedication -- to his staff, to the FDIC, to the nation. He has served the FDIC and the nation for 32 years -- the last 18 as Field Office Supervisor of the Sioux City, Iowa, Field Office. Nine years ago, a third of the state nonmember banks supervised out of that office were rated "3," "4" or "5." The entire Midwest was in an agricultural crisis from the early 1980s. Michael Nelson had a staff of 17, only six of whom were commissioned examiners, including Michael Nelson himself. Seven of the 11 assistant examiners were trainees.

How did Michael Nelson cope?

One person who knows Michael Nelson -- and the problems he faced -- put it this way: "Having observed and worked with outstanding field office supervisors in three FDIC Regions representing about 45 percent of the field offices in the country, I can testify that I have never seen anyone work harder and sacrifice more personal time to the Division of Supervision and Corporation mission."

Michael Nelson, this is what your colleagues say about you: "Mr. Nelson motivates his staff to work efficiently without dominating or invoking fear. Rather, he instills a desire to work to the best of one's ability and to always strive to improve. Mr. Nelson personally pursues this goal each day and serves as an example."

When Michael Nelson received his award for 30-years service, he told his supervisor: "I sincerely enjoy my work and look forward to a few more challenges."

Today, with one exception, every bank supervised by the Sioux City Field Office is a Composite "1" or "2." Of the 17 examiners in the office, 13 are commissioned.

Michael, I am especially pleased to present you the Edward J. Roddy Examiner Excellence

Award. Edward Roddy was a career FDIC bank examiner for 28 years, raising from "trainee" to director of the division of bank supervision. Throughout his career he demonstrated the highest order of devotion to duty, integrity, professional expertise, imagination and leadership. In his honor, the Edward J. Roddy award is given each year to an FDIC examiner with ten or more years' service who exhibits these virtues. Please come forward, Michael, to accept this award with our gratitude.

We at the FDIC also have a tradition of recognizing one of our own for public service outside our institutional context. When it comes to serving the needs of others, James L. Parrish, of the Office of the Ombudsman, sets an example for us all. His life is centered on serving others.

Within the FDIC, for example, he committed himself to finding a way to assist a visually impaired colleague to do her job as a receptionist in his department. On his personal time, James Parrish attended computer/technology fairs to find out what was available specifically for her needs. When he had sufficient information, he took his colleague to a supplier where she tested various products. James Parrish then worked with the Division of Information Resources Management, the Division of Depositor and Asset Services, the Office of Equal Opportunity, and public agencies to get the necessary approvals for the training and equipment that enabled his colleague to do her job.

Moreover, for years, James Parrish has devoted 40 to 60 hours each month to working as a volunteer for various organizations in Dallas: Oak Lawn Community Services, the Women's Chorus of Dallas, Leadership Lambda, the Dallas Legal Hospice and Bryan's House, among others. Oak Lawn Community Services addresses the needs of people affected by HIV/AIDS. Through this organization, James Parrish provides physical assistance and emotional support to people who have often been abandoned by their families and friends, and who are dying. He was Chairman of the Board for that organization for 1994-1995.

James Parrish's supervisor says that he views opportunities to serve others as a privilege.

James Parrish, it is a privilege for me to award you the Nancy K. Rector Award.

Nancy K. Rector was an FDIC employee who made a lasting and very personal contribution to the Corporation. She is remembered for her willingness and ability to assist others in developing their own talents and potential. We recognize such qualities and the commitment to helping others with the Nancy K. Rector Award, which I now present to James Parrish. Thank you, James.

I have saved the Chairman's Excellence Awards until last.

The Chairman's Excellence Award is given to those career employees who have demonstrated extraordinary dedication, competence, imagination and leadership in relation to the mission, vision, and values of the Corporation. This appreciation extends not only to individuals but also

to teams who have shown such dedication, competence, and service to the Corporation. There are eight recipients, including two teams:

John J. Chipouras, Chief of the Benefits Unit of the Personnel Services Branch in the Division of Administration. John is responsible for all the Corporation's employee benefits programs, including health and life insurance; the FDIC thrift plan; and retirement programs. He has enabled the Benefits Unit to identify and create a wide range of innovative new programs, along with enhancements to existing operations. For example, John has spearheaded the addition of more investment fund options available to employees under the FDIC 401(k) plan, and the addition of extremely helpful features such as loan by phone, which cuts down the time required to get a loan. John's work and commitment have improved the lives of every FDIC employee.

Leonard Glenn is a bank examiner in the Division of Supervision's New York Region. Leonard has worked to ensure that equal opportunity and diversity issues are addressed throughout the Corporation and has taken a focused interest in the development and training of his fellow examiners. Leonard was one of three people who developed an educational workshop designed to strengthen the financial performance of banks through the use of case studies and hands-on examples. That program was given at the National Bankers Association annual convention in New York last September and has since been offered to other regional offices and state regulators. Leonard has helped move the FDIC toward our Corporate goal of preventing bank problems in a very tangible and useful way.

James A. Hand is also a bank examiner in the Division of Supervision's New York Region. James' expertise in the area of capital markets led to the creation of the New York Region's Capital Market Targeted Visitation Program. He was also instrumental in the implementation of the region's Mutual Funds Visitation Program, which is aimed at insuring that banks take reasonable measures to promote public awareness of what mutual funds are and are not, and that banks are not engaging in practices that could harm safety and soundness. The Corporation has benefitted greatly from his skill and knowledge -- and from his efforts to work cooperatively across internal organizational boundaries and with other regulatory agencies.

John Mihall, assistant director in the Training Operations Section of the Training and Consulting Branch, Division of Administration. John is responsible for the Corporation's training facilities at Virginia Square. He is a model of managerial initiative -- for example, he has been the primary push behind a new automated training management system. This system will revolutionize the way all Corporate employees training records are maintained and the way that course administration will occur. It will replace ten existing, disparate systems and will eliminate duplication in their management. Further, John has served employees throughout the Corporation through the creation of special programs such as AIDS/HIV awareness training, alternative dispute resolution training and the Corporation's out placement programs. He is one engine that drives the Corporation's never-ending effort to improve.