

Lewis Katz '66g

Lewis Katz never thought he'd be receiving an award from Penn State. It's not that he wasn't a good student; Katz was on the Law Review and graduated first in his class at The Dickinson School of Law. But that was 1966, more than three decades before his alma mater would become The Dickinson School of Law of The Pennsylvania State University. He laughs recalling that until recently, "The only time I had been to Penn State was to see my girlfriend!" That girlfriend—Marjorie, a 1965 University graduate—later became his wife.



For most of his life, Katz never strayed far from where he was born and raised: Camden, N.J. He received his bachelor's degree from Temple and spent a year as an editorial assistant to journalist Drew Pearson before entering Dickinson. Following law school, he clerked for Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chief Justice John C. Bell, Jr. He established Katz, Ettin & Levine, a Cherry Hill-based law firm, before starting his successful run in business. "I'm very grateful and feel privileged to have been so lucky. I know I was lucky," he insists. "The value of businesses often turns on things beyond your control," he says. "Parking, billboards, and banking all consolidated while I was in them and that boosted their value."

In 1998, he entered the world of professional sports as principal shareholder in a group of investors (including Bill Cosby, a friend from Temple) who bought the New Jersey Nets of the NBA and later the NHL's New Jersey Devils. Katz also is part owner of the New York Yankees. Though he'll retain some interest, the group is selling the Nets to Brooklyn investors this summer.

Katz gives time and money to many organizations. He serves on the board of trustees of Temple University and the board of governors for Dickinson, among others. He's played a major role in developing the Jewish community centers of Cherry Hill and Margate, N.J. Both are named in honor of his parents. He says he supports community centers "because they provide a place for young and old to mix and share." He assisted his synagogue with building an educational campus in Voorhees, N.J., named in honor of his children. And he remains true to his hometown. "I have a particular affection for Camden, where so much of my life was shaped by the community," he says. "By fulfilling a role in that area, I help where a lot of people aren't willing to serve." Katz worked to establish the Boys and Girls Club of Camden County, named after him and his wife, a cause he describes as "very close to my heart."

In 2000, Katz and his colleague Raymond Chambers received the Bridge Builders Award from the Partners for Livable Communities for donating profits from their part-ownership in YankeeNets to provide scholarships, nutritional training, and tutoring to youth in five New Jersey cities. The University and the Dickinson School of Law have previously recognized Katz with induction into the Second Century Circle of the John Reed Society and as an Alumni Fellow (1999). When asked what he'll tackle next, the candid and colorful Katz pauses. "I'm not sure what's next," he says. "I don't have a clue. But I think there's a plan out there God has for people." He suddenly laughs. "Boy, does that sound heavy!"

*This career summary is excerpted from the 2004 Distinguished Alumni Awards Ceremony booklet (June 4, 2004, The Pennsylvania State University).