

**Rich Rulon's Acceptance Speech**  
**AILF Honorary Fellow Award**  
**September 16, 2005**

Thank you all for being here tonight. I wish to express my very deep appreciation to the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees of the American Immigration Law Foundation for bestowing this great honor upon me. It is an extraordinary privilege to join the ranks of the prior recipients of this award which reads like a Who's Who in Immigration. I would have loved for my wife of 41 years, Nancy, and my five daughters, Melissa, Stephanie, Jennifer, Samantha, and Amanda, to have joined me this evening in Seattle but unfortunately, that was not to be. My wife is back in Philadelphia doing something that is near and dear to her heart - helping my daughter, Jennifer, who recently gave birth to two baby girls - Hannah and Paige. My other four daughters, between the demands of work and raising children, were unable to make the trek to Seattle. I am very pleased that my partners, Ron Klasko and Bill Stock, are here tonight. Unfortunately, my other partner, Suzanne Seltzer, could not be here. She is back in the East tending to the firm's business. Ron and I have been practicing immigration law together as partners since 1987. We were joined first by Bill and thereafter by Suzanne. No one could ask for better partners. If there were a Partners Hall of Fame, Ron, Bill and Suzanne would certainly be in it. I thank them for the unqualified support and encouragement they have given to me over the years.

Serving as a Trustee and then as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of AILF has been an incredibly rewarding and fulfilling experience. It has afforded me the opportunity to work with and get to know a great group of caring and compassionate people bound together by their zealous commitment to AILF and its mission of advancing the cause of immigration in this country.

My relationship with AILF can be traced back to a cold, snowy fall evening in Albuquerque, New Mexico where Sam Myers, after plying me with a number of beers, asked me if I might be interested in joining the Board of Trustees of AILF. When I saw the list of truly extraordinary immigration practitioners who comprised the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees of AILF, I leapt at the opportunity. Shortly after joining the Board of Trustees, Bob Juceam and, I believe, Dale Schwartz, asked me if I would consider becoming Chairman of the Board of Trustees. It is very difficult to say "no" to anything these two gentlemen ask, so I agreed. I quickly discovered that AILF and its staff were in the throes of a financial and leadership crisis and that we needed to replace the existing Executive Director. The organization, however, did not have the resources to hire someone with the level of talent and leadership skills required to keep the organization running and put in place a first rate staff. I turned to Jeanne Butterfield, and asked if, in addition to her duties as Executive Director of AILA, she would be willing to serve as Acting Executive Director of AILF. Although Jeanne's plate was more than full, to her great credit, she readily agreed to assume this additional responsibility and set about rebuilding AILF's staff. She brought aboard among others, her successor, Andy Prazuch, as Assistant Executive Director, and Nadine Wettstein, the present LAC Director. I want to take a moment to thank Jeanne for answering the call in AILF's moment of need. She provided the AILF organization with the managerial and administrative skills it badly needed and her unwavering commitment to AILF was instrumental in restoring the organization's credibility with the leadership of AILA.

Another pivotal step in AILF's revitalization was the decision of the Board of Directors to appoint Peggy McCormick President of AILF's Board of Directors. Peggy brought to this position unbridled enthusiasm, a wealth of new ideas and the will, drive and determination to turn these ideas into reality. She launched AILF on a series of new initiatives including the American Heritage Project, which transformed AILF's Annual Benefit into a highly successful fund-raising event. She also presided over the birth of a new and effective voice to combat FAIR - AILF's Immigration Policy Center. We can all take pride in AILF's successes which are the product of an extraordinary team effort and could not have been accomplished without the support and hard work of AILF's dedicated staff, a highly committed and energetic Board of Trustees and Board of Directors and the unwavering support - financial and otherwise - of AILA's leadership.

One of the signs of a strong and mature organization is its ability to make a smooth transition in leadership. AILF has accomplished this. Steve Ladik took over as President from Peggy and Cyrus Mehta took over as Chairman of the Board of Trustees from me and, under their leadership, AILF has continued to grow as an effective counterforce to FAIR and the other restrictionists. Isn't it exciting to have policy papers prepared by the Immigration Policy Center cited in **The Wall Street Journal**, **The New York Times** and other prestigious newspapers and to have the Center's Director, Ben Johnson, appear on national TV as an extremely effective advocate for immigration. And what about the successes enjoyed by the Legal Action Center under the leadership of its Director, Nadine Wettstein. The level of respect and credibility that is now accorded the Legal Action Center by the Judiciary exceeds our most optimistic expectations. It is best exemplified in an Opinion by Chief Judge Becker of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit where he said, and I quote, "It appears that the amicus curiae American Immigration Law Foundation has made a concerted effort to bring and argue this claim in many of the Courts of Appeals. The result of this effort, for our purposes is that we have two recent well-reasoned Opinions from other Courts of Appeal to consult in ruling on the validity of the regulation." Needless to say, Judge Becker adopted the arguments presented by AILF and his favorable ruling is a real feather in LAC's cap.

While we all may wish to pause for a moment and rest on AILF's laurels, the battle is far from won; indeed it is really just begun. We face a well-financed, resourceful and extremely persistent foe. But AILF and its allies including AILA, now have the critical mass to take the offensive. I urge AILF's Directors, Trustees, staff and its allies to move forward and seize this opportunity. As you gird yourselves for the coming battle, rest assured that AILF's former Directors and Trustees will not fade away like old soldiers. Rather, we are planning to put in place a vehicle through which we can act as a resource to provide AILF with fresh and creative ideas and take on specific projects when requested to do so.

In closing, I accept this award as an Honorary Fellow not only on behalf of myself, but on behalf of the Board of Directors, the Board of Trustees and the staff of AILF with whom I served and without whose support the successes we celebrate here could not have been accomplished.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to be a participant in AILF's remarkable journey.

Thank you.