

Both Sides in Bell Case Pay Tribute To Court Officers

By MIA GOLDBERG

Amid their fierce disagreements over the trial's outcome, both Sean Bell's family members and the Detectives accused of killing him and their attorneys found one piece of common ground: appreciation for the court officers and other court employees who dealt with them in the Queens courthouse during the eight-week proceeding.

"... the respect, protection and the sincere kindness that was received from the court officers facilitating each day, served as a small comfort at a most unfavorable time in [our] lives ... Thank you," wrote William and Valerie Bell, the parents of the slain man, in a May 8 letter released last week by the Office of Court Administration.

'Kept It Efficient and Dignified'

In a May 13 letter written "on behalf of all of the attorneys and defendants," defense attorney Steven R. Kartagener said the entire staff "made sure that, without exception, the judicial proceedings ... were conducted in an efficient, dignified, cooperative and respectful manner that reflected so positively on Queens County's criminal justice system." Mr. Kartagener mentioned numerous individual court officers and the Court Clerk for Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Cooperman.

"The court officers did an outstanding job during this lengthy trial. It's wonderful and interesting that both sides took the time to acknowledge the work and professionalism of the court officers and court personnel," said OCA chief spokesman David Bookstaver in a May 28 interview.

Court Officers Association President Dennis Quirk—who played a key role in coordinating courthouse security throughout the trial—remarked, "Everyone may not have been happy with the judge's decision, but they were happy with the way they were treated by us."