

A letter written by Jonathan F. Fanton for the Union Square Reunion
At the Con Edison Headquarters,
Wednesday, December 15, 2010

This is a reunion I really did not want to miss. But chance intervened and I am not able to be with you in person. I am, however, very much with you in spirit. I am on the mend and expect a full recovery.

Rob Walsh has done an incredible job in organizing this event which brings together colleagues who have become close friends. He did a great job as our leader, building the ties that bind, taking on the tough challenges and making things happen for institutions and individuals. Gene and I were a natural team for 20 years. So when he spoke, you heard my thoughts as well.

The 14th Street Union Square Development LDC was the model for the MacArthur Foundation's Community Development work. Lessons learned here have traveled across our country and inspired neighborhood leaders, university presidents, business leaders and more to make common cause with government to open opportunity for all.

Others will speak on the remarkable transformation of our neighborhood and Jim Gabbe has given us a magisterial history of the Square and the streets that surround it. When you think of locations over the ages that have nurtured commerce, creativity and common values, Union Square ranks with the ancient and renaissance leaders.

Let me close on a personal note. Sharp setbacks spark introspection about what really matters in life. As I look back on my life, working with all of you is a high point of meaningful satisfaction and proud accomplishment. I feel closer to you than perhaps any other colleagues in my career. We have a dream of an America which is prosperous, fair, decent and diverse. That vision keeps me going, lifts my spirits, and fires my determination.

I cannot say that I wish you were here. I can say that I wish I were there.