

REMARKS

*Michael Garcia**

PROFESSOR CONNORS: I met Mike Garcia in 1990 when I was clerking for Judge Simons at the Court of Appeals. At the time, he was clerking with Judge Kaye. And right away we realized we had something in common, we both owed our jobs to Professor Siegel who had recommended us for those positions.

And I think everybody, all the clerks on the court and the judges, worked very hard, but I know that Mike and I shared a special intensity because we knew that if our work wasn't up to par we'd have to answer to Judge Kaye and Judge Simons, but more importantly, we'd have to answer to Professor Siegel.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mike Garcia.

MR. GARCIA: Thank you, Pat. That was a nice spin on our relationship.

In fact when it became clear that Pat was going to become the heir to the CPLR, I went into criminal law.

(Laughter)

But it's a great honor to be here and talk a little bit from the perspective of all the students that have had Professor Siegel as a teacher. And we all, I am sure—and we've heard a few—have stories of Professor Siegel from class.

Professor Siegel himself actually likes to tell a story about me and being in his classroom. And the story goes something like this. The Professor and I have a disagreement over a provision of the CPLR. We disagree in front of about a hundred or so of my peers. And we each grab our code book, and as we're furiously flipping through the pages, Professor Siegel lets it be known to the students that, "One of us is going to have a very red face."

(Laughter)

Now it came to pass that the person with the red face in that

* Michael J. Garcia is a partner at Kirkland & Ellis LLP. He served as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York from 2005 to 2008. He is a 1989 graduate of Albany Law School.

instance was actually him. And it's a great story and I always like to hear it and tell it.

(Laughter)

But one thing always strikes me—as the Professor tells it—is there's a note of genuine shock and disbelief that creeps into his voice every time he gets to the end.

(Laughter)

And in fact he's told it a number of times. He has a name for that story and it's called, "The time I was wrong."

(Laughter)

And I have to say, it is not a representative story of Professor Siegel in class, not only because he was really never wrong, but because there are better stories about Professor Siegel and what it meant to have him as a teacher, as a mentor, and as a friend. And I'd like to just tell a couple of very brief ones here.

And Pat mentioned a little bit about the Court of Appeals. When I was a third year law student and I think I was in Professor Siegel's office and I mentioned to him, you know, I really wanted to do a clerkship. And of course I didn't have my act together and I had never gotten the applications in, but it was something I really—I was rather disappointed that I was leaving the law school and I hadn't pursued. And we never talked about it again. And a year later, I was sitting at my desk—I think it was after an all-nighter at a law firm—I get a call, it's Professor Siegel, and he says why don't you call Judge Kaye's chambers and see about setting up an interview there. And I did and I interviewed with the Judge and as a result of Professor Siegel's persistent recommendation and an uncharacteristic lapse in judgment by the Judge.

(Laughter)

She hired me for that clerkship, which was an incredible experience. And as I got to the end of that clerkship I was speaking with Professor Siegel again and I said, you know, the job, the only job I want coming out of this clerkship is to be an assistant United States attorney in the Southern District of New York, and he listened, and shortly thereafter he sent Otto Obermaier a letter of recommendation. Otto was the U.S. attorney at the time, Professor Siegel knew him from St. John's Law School, sent him this beautiful letter on my behalf—included a copy of his new book—and told him—

(Laughter)

He actually thought I might be a Republican, which took me a

2009]

Remarks

409

while to realize this wasn't such a good thing for the professor, but I was. And, I got the job, obviously also with the help of Judge Kaye.

And not only did I get that job but in the interview process, and it's a brutal interview process at the office, I came out of St. John—St. Andrews Plaza that first night of interviews, which is five interviews, it's like three hours, it's at night. Professor Siegel was in the city that night on business, I came out, he met me on the street outside, we walked over to dinner, and he heard all about my interview experience, how excited I was to be—actually being considered for that job, and as I said, with his help I did get that job. And he understood how much it meant to me to have that clerkship or to have that job in the U.S. Attorney's office. He remembered my aspirations, my dreams about those jobs, and he acted on it and he helped me.

And recently—and this surprises me somewhat—but I found myself in a position of being able to do that for others, to help people in their careers, to write letters of recommendation, to make phone calls for folks, and I try to do that. And somebody said to me not a couple of days ago, "Wow, it's very nice of you to do that." And all I could think of was, you know, I had a great teacher.

And I think when I look on this audience and I see Pat and I see so many folks here who have stories like that, I think that is such a fitting tribute to Professor Siegel, stories like that, stories about him helping others along in their careers, making a difference. It shows that Professor Siegel is not only this giant in the law, which he is, he is a great teacher, a great mentor, and a great friend.

Thank you.

(Applause)

PROFESSOR CONNORS: Earlier this month we saw the conclusion of a long, long campaign and, regardless of which side you were on, I'm sure most people in the room are happy that it's over.

Well, Professor Siegel has really been conducting a forty-five year campaign in New York State. And during the last half century, by my count, I think he's developed one of the most dedicated audiences ever enjoyed by a law professor.

And if you go to his CLE's they really are amazing and fun events. His message is really simple: New York Practice is a scene in motion, follow it and ignore it at your peril. That's it in summation.

And this has not been a campaign conducted from afar, from the ivory tower. No. Professor Siegel has in essence conducted a

whistle-stop tour of New York State. And he has gone to virtually every county in the state to present his message to the bench and to the bar, unlike virtually any professor in his lifetime.

Often, these events are New York State Bar Association programs. And there's amazing energy, as I said, and Professor Siegel, it's like any good show. Professor Siegel gives to the audience, the audience learns a lot, but he takes from the audience and he learns from the audience. And I think what makes Professor Siegel so successful is at heart he's always been a student and he's always learning something either through cases or through lawyers. And then what he does is he goes back to his home, and he writes, and he incorporates what he's learned into his writing.