

I arrived at Rutgers Law School in 1967. At that time, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was an Associate Professor of Law. There was a secretarial pool composed of four secretaries that served that entire faculty. When a faculty member called for secretarial assistance, the secretary who was free at the time was sent to take dictation. I was fortunate to go when Professor Ginsburg called. We seemed to bond immediately, and from that day on she always requested me when she wanted to dictate. I was a shy, 18 year old who didn't know "forum shopping" from "grocery shopping". I made lots of mistakes, but she was very understanding and kind, providing much needed guidance. She was an immediate inspiration to me.

I remember the day she received a telephone call from her housekeeper informing her that her two year old son, James, had somehow gotten under the kitchen cabinet and swallowed Drano. When President Clinton nominated Justice Ginsburg to the Supreme Court, I wrote to congratulate her and mentioned that I remembered the incident. She wrote back on June 30, 1993, and remarked (in her own handwriting) "what an extraordinary memory you have. Son, James, now 28, has barely a scar left".

I have many notes and letters from Justice Ginsburg, as well as photographs of us together. I am especially fond of one taken at the Law School dedication in 1999. She inscribed it "to Marie Melito with appreciation, affection and every good wish". It is one of the few times she signed her complete name.

In 1995, I was honored to be able to share reminiscences of Justice Ginsburg at a special Rutgers Law School program honoring her called "Rutgers Women and Public Policy", a program honoring Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Before departing for Washington that evening, Justice Ginsburg invited me to Washington as her guest to hear any case argued before the Supreme Court. Unfortunately, I never got to do so.

She may have been very small in stature, and very soft-spoken, but she was no shrinking violet. She cared very much about women's rights and human rights. If it wasn't for the doors she opened, I may have never climbed the ladder to become Associate Dean.

But the biggest thrill for me was when she approved Dean Ronald Chen's request to permit me to retire from the Law School (after 48 years) in 2015, as the "Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Associate Dean Emerita". She sent me congratulations on my retirement, and enclosed a reprint from the Minnesota Law Review, which she inscribed, of a conversation with Professor Robert A. Stein during the Stein Lecture, which took place in September 2014. At the end of the lecture there is a question and answer period. The last question to Justice Ginsburg comes from a 12 year old boy who asked "what issues would define the Court going into the future?" She responded that "the environment would be a major issue ... and that technology would also loom large ... And that discrimination cases will still be with us. I'd like to say I could see a future when discrimination will no longer infect economic and social interactions, but we have a way to go in that regard".

Her response serves as a true testament to the vision and insight of a remarkable, brilliant, exceptional individual who touched my life in a very special way. There will never be another like her.