

Thank you Marc Levinson for those gracious comments. In addition to being one of the foremost national experts in the world of Chapter 9, Marc would have been a great fiction writer based on some of the comments you just heard.

I met and worked with Marc nearly 40 years ago in a case where Ron Trost, a mentor to both of us, was working with my firm on a significant matter in New Orleans. I have been a great fan of Marc's ever since.

When Marc assumed leadership of the College he asked me if I would step into the General Counsel role. I was reluctant to take on the responsibility and wondered if I could competently follow in the footsteps of Bill Perlstein who had served with distinction in the position for years. As an indication of his confidence in me, Marc enticed me by telling me that being in a big firm I had the resources to help me not screw up the job.

Many thanks to the College for this recognition with special thanks to the selection committee which considered many other deserving nominees. Thank you especially to Judge Laurel Isicoff and my wonderful law partner of many years, Lisa Futrell, for putting together the nomination package. Lisa has been an important collaborator with me in most of my work over the years.

On balance some would say that I have learned more from her than she from me.

When I graduated from law school in 1975, bankruptcy was not on my radar at all. I had not taken the course. My mentor at Jones Walker was a litigator. Living in New Orleans he **really** enjoyed food. And he loved talking about food. He especially liked a San Francisco restaurant that he had recently visited and waxed on about a beef wellington he had enjoyed there. Having never been to San Francisco or eaten beef wellington I found a litigation seminar there and sought his approval to attend. He turned me down. He told me that a litigation seminar was not a good fit for a first year associate. About a month later he came to my office and put a bankruptcy seminar brochure on my desk. I winced. Then I told him that I really didn't have any interest. My worse grade in law school had been Security Devices. He drew my attention to the venue – San Francisco ... and the rest is history. I ate well during that trip **and** I even managed to learn a little about summary and plenary jurisdiction. It was a good thing. As the firm's "bankruptcy expert," I quickly found myself involved in a matter where the lawyer on the other side was the intimidating and brilliant Carolyn Randall. Now known as Judge Carolyn King, a senior appellate judge on the 5th Circuit. It was the start of a long

friendship that continues to this day and the start of the journey that brings me here this evening.

Having been a member of the College since 1995, I have attended most of the annual meetings and have listened to the recitation of the virtues of past award winners. I have worked with many of them in some capacity. All are lions of the bar or bench or academy. In accepting this award, I must acknowledge my gratitude to each of them for their inspiration. And while I am proud to join their ranks, I am more than humbled. So **Here I Am** on **your** special day – Class 36.

Each of you will come up here this evening, all looking very sharp, pose with Jennifer, and celebrate this evening with your family and friends. But, I also know that a few of you regrettably may never come back and if not, you will miss the opportunities that this College has to offer.

The College is full of potential mentors. Some are kind of intimidating until you get to know them, but **most** all - are actually nice people. It would be a real shame if you went home with your pretty certificate and did not come back.

Why? Because your participation is crucial to the continued life and energy of this College. The rewards you will receive will be more than professional; they will be deeply personal also. The College will thrive and improve as you step up and participate in its work and eventually assume leadership positions. And by so doing you will become mentors to those who follow behind you. I am certain that most of you, are here this evening because you had a mentor. So I know you appreciate the value of being a mentor yourself and “paying it forward”.

The ABA’s Model Rules of Professional Conduct are instructive of what is expected of us as public citizens. Among our responsibilities is this admonition “to seek improvement of the law, access to the legal system and the administration of justice. ...”

I do not take this responsibility as a simple aspiration, but almost as a mandate. And, I know that many of you here this evening feel the same and the College is a great platform to carry out this responsibility.

Since this award is for **Service**, I want to highlight the College's Foundation just briefly. In addition to having served as Chair of the Foundation, back home I also served as president of the local Legal Services board which is the largest provider of free legal aid for low-income individuals in Louisiana. It assists consumers, domestic violence victims, abused and neglected children, veterans, and people with disabilities.

Legal Services are completely dependent on funding from charitable grants and the federal government. Since the government's share of the funding has shrunk over the years and may shrink more, Legal Services has become more reliant on the private sector. For the last twenty years, our Foundation with the generous support of our Fellows have raised over \$5 million dollars to support pro bono grants for Legal Services.

I could not be more proud of the College's Fellows for their support. So you see – the College is a special institution that you have been invited to and you are right to be proud of your Fellowship.

Lastly, I am grateful to have my family here. They have traveled from New Orleans and Brooklyn Heights. I am very proud of my son Bobby who is a lawyer in the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice, and his spouse, Chris Kelly, a TV and movie writer of some renown; but most importantly, my bride of many decades.

Sarah is my greatest motivator and source of inspiration – known to many as The Judge or “**her honor**” since she has been a federal district judge for the past 30 years. You might wonder what it is like to be married to a federal judge. The answer - I get overruled a lot.

Congratulations again to this great class of Fellows. May this evening give you and your families wonderful memories for years to come. And as Charlie would say – y’all come back. Thank you.