

University of Baltimore School of Law
Twentieth Annual Awards Ceremony
April 6, 2014

Thank you, Dean Weich, for that wonderful introduction. It is a pleasure to be here today to congratulate each and every one of you, students and faculty alike, on your outstanding accomplishments in teaching, scholarship, advocacy, and service this year.

As I was preparing my remarks for this afternoon, I could not help but contemplate my own law school experience—the first, formative year of which was here at UB—and experiences since then that have brought me to my current place at the helm of the Judiciary, the third branch of our State government. My career path is one of twists and turns, and events that I never could have predicted or anticipated, when I began law school almost 35 years ago. So, as I return today to my legal roots here at UB Law—although the digs then were not nearly as palatial as this gorgeous building of which you all must be so proud—I would like to take just a few moments to trace, briefly I promise, my steps from law school to the position I am now so fortunate to occupy.

Thirty five (35) years ago this coming August, I began law school. At that time, I was teaching in the Baltimore City Public School system, was married, and had two young children at home. So, I attended law school at night. My professional goals were modest: get through law school; pass the bar exam; and, hopefully, secure some sort of job in the legal profession. Perhaps your goals are similar, or perhaps yours are more refined than were mine.

I graduated in May 1984, resigned as a public school teacher, passed the Maryland bar

exam, and obtained a clerkship with a judge on the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, the wonderful Robert Karwacki, now retired. I had developed an interest in criminal law during law school and hoped that, following my clerkship, I might become either an Assistant State's Attorney in Baltimore City or an assistant public defender, trying criminal cases in the City courthouse.

But what, for me, was a major twist of fate came just a few days after my clerkship began: My judge was appointed to the Court of Special Appeals. I was thrust into the world of appellate litigation: reading briefs, reviewing transcripts, researching the law, opinion writing, oral arguments in Annapolis, and the like. Far from the courtrooms of Baltimore City Circuit Court, to be sure!

During my clerkship, I applied for several jobs to follow the conclusion of my year with the judge. I suffered a few rejections but was hired by then-Attorney General Steve Sachs to be an Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Appeals Division. To this day, I attribute my good fortune in being hired at the A.G.'s Office—and the sharp turn in the anticipated trajectory of my career—to my judge's appointment to the Court of Special Appeals.

While in the Criminal Appeals Division of the A.G.'s office, I had the chance to appear before state and federal appellate courts, and thoroughly loved the job. As I grew in experience, I became Deputy Chief of that Division, which gave me the chance to learn a bit about management as well as the opportunity to work with Attorney General J. Joseph Curran on cases before the United States Supreme Court, and with him and others on

legislation. I also became involved in Bar Association Committee work, and I taught as an adjunct faculty member at several area law schools: here at UB, initially in the legal writing program and following that, Appellate Advocacy. Later, I began teaching—and still do teach—as an adjunct professor, at the Washington College of Law, American University’s law school in D.C. The law school is a bit closer to where I now live, in Montgomery County. Then and now, I teach Criminal Procedure.

During the mid-nineties, while still working at the Office of the Attorney General, I made my first efforts to become a judge on Maryland’s Court of Special Appeals – the State’s court of direct appellate review. I applied for a position on that court twice in the mid-1990s and, on both occasions, progressed sufficiently in the process to have an interview with then-Governor Parris Glendening. I was not appointed either time.

Yet another twist of fate—my not getting appointed as a judge—led to another job opportunity, one that I would never have predicted for myself. Two months after my interview with Governor Glendening in late 1997—the one that did **not** land me the job of judge—I was invited by the Governor’s legal counsel, with the Governor’s concurrence, to join the Governor’s Office of Legal Counsel.

I took the job—who wouldn’t??—and found myself within a matter of days a member of the Governor’s senior staff. I became Chief Legal Counsel to Governor Glendening a year later.

During the 4 years I spent in the Governor’s Office, I had the extraordinary opportunity to work with and learn from leaders in the executive, legislative, and judicial

branches of state government. Meanwhile, I continued to teach and stayed involved in Bar Association Committee work, both of which pursuits kept me in contact with many fine law professors, lawyers, and judges.

All of those circumstances combined to lead me to my appointment in 2002 as a judge of the Court of Special Appeals. I returned to the very courtrooms where, years earlier, as an Assistant Attorney General, I had argued so many criminal cases on appeal. I was privileged—thrilled really—to sit side by side with many of the same judges before whom I had presented those cases.

Nearly 7 years later, in September 2008, Governor Martin O'Malley appointed me to the Court of Appeals and, since July of last year, I have been privileged to serve as Chief Judge.

Why have I taken this opportunity to recap my career with you? It is, I hope, to demonstrate, by resort to one person's career in the law, that no one can predict with any degree of certainty, the trajectory of your legal career: what combination of hard work, timing, sheer luck, successes, AND failures—recall the jobs I sought but did not get—will open doors you might not imagine for yourself, today.

So I encourage you, even as you set about to plan and prepare for your own career, that you live, at least to some extent, in the moment. Seize the chance to continue to learn and grow in the challenging and nurturing environment of this excellent law school. I also encourage you to welcome—now, and in the years that follow—the twists and turns of your own career path that will present opportunities for personal growth and professional

satisfaction. Finally, I ask of you, as you contemplate the future—to consider how you plan to embrace the twin ideals that must remain uppermost for all of us lawyers and judges: adherence to the rule of law and fairness in the administration of justice, in all its many aspects.

Thank you, Dean Weich, once again, for the opportunity to be here today with all of you, and to congratulate and celebrate with you, for the awards and recognitions bestowed upon you today. Know, please, that you have my best wishes for much personal and professional satisfaction in the future.

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