

BENCHIED

Abortion, Terrorists, Drones, Crooks,
Supreme Court, Kennedy, Nixon, Demi Moore, and
Other Tales from the Life of a Federal Judge

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William S. Hein & Co., Inc.
Getzville, New York
2017

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Foreword

(From remarks by Justice Sonia Sotomayor,
Devitt Award ceremony, Supreme Court, Dec. 8, 2016)

I took advantage of the generosity of my colleague Justice Elena Kagan by insinuating myself into the line-up of accomplished individuals speaking here tonight. Others will ably discuss Judge Newman's contributions to his court. I will limit myself to talking about Jon as a person and friend.

Jon Newman is a man of uncommon brilliance, and generosity. These two attributes, out of many, are what I will focus on tonight.

As everyone here is well aware, Jon's brilliance is reflected in his resumé and his exhaustive list of academic scholarship.

Jon's curiosity is vast. He has written extensively on diverse aspects of the law. He even found time over a period of thirty-nine years to finish a project started by his father, Harold Newman, entitled "A Genealogical Chart of Greek Mythology."

Truly, Jon is a Renaissance Man for our age. This brilliance is not just in the conceptual, but in the all-important details, as well.

Jon spent years poring over the Second Circuit docket analyzing the thousands of cases to see which cases had terminated but for which some final ministerial step had not been taken. I know that virtually every judge of the Circuit would have received a lovely, diplomatic note saying something like: "Sonia, I happen to notice that in 'X' case, it appears the parties moved to dismiss their claims but failed to note what they intended to do with their counterclaims. Given the inactivity in the docket of this case for more than three years, I think it fair to assume they intended to dismiss the entire case. Would you consider entering an order like the following to get the case removed from the calendar?" A perfectly worded, precisely drafted order would follow.

So, what kind of person does this? Is the person just a compulsive, meddling human being? In Jon's case, I can say with absolute conviction—No. This person, who takes such pains to get things right and to help those around him get it right, is a generous person.

I have personally benefitted from his generosity, as has each person who has sat with him on the Second Circuit.

Anyone who has had any interaction with Jon knows that Jon above all cares about the world he lives in, the institutions he works with, and the people he calls friends. His generous nature has focused his brilliance toward the most worthy of endeavors.

Jon has devoted his brilliance to service in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

In each, his service was always geared to improving the way government works and improving how it delivers services to the public. Hence, from this, his unrelenting dedication to ensuring that the Second Circuit and all his judicial colleagues functioned at its and their best.

Jon listens carefully to what others say and then finds resolutions that meet their needs and the situation's needs. It is why so many look to him for guidance and resolution of difficult situations. It has been his role at the Second Circuit through the tenure of every chief judge.

The purpose of life to Jon is service to others, and this extends beyond the hallowed halls of government to his work on community committees. His involvement in these committees demonstrates his true commitment to his community, not just in words and judicial opinions but in action.

I will close with a final thought: Above all else, Jon is a gentle soul whose calmness, caring, and generosity of spirit touch everyone he interacts with. Jon is the perfect recipient of the Devitt Award.