



## **125<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY GALA**

**OCTOBER 25, 2018**

***FOR THOSE WHO WERE NOT ABLE TO ATTEND THE ANNIVERSARY GALA, BELOW PLEASE FIND REMARKS FROM THOSE WHO INTRODUCED OUR HONOREES, AND SPEECHES FROM THE HONOREES THEMSELVES.***

**GUEST OF HONOR: THE HONORABLE JANET DIFIORE, CHIEF JUDGE OF THE COURT OF APPEALS AND THE STATE OF NEW YORK**

***Introduction by: Hon. Robert Berliner, Justice of the Supreme Court***

Good evening everyone and what a special evening it is....we are celebrating the 125<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary of the Rockland County Bar Association! I want to congratulate the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award, Richard Glickel and the recipient of the Natalie Couch Award, Lawrence Codisoti.

For this special evening we have a very special guest of honor: The Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals Janet DeFiore. Judge DeFiore graduated St. John's University School of Law. She was elected judge of the Westchester County Court in 1998 and was elected justice of the New York State Supreme Court in 2002. She served as supervising judge of the criminal courts for the Ninth Judicial District. In 2005 Judge DeFiore was elected Westchester District Attorney and served in this position until 2016. She was nominated by Governor Andrew Cuomo to her position as chief judge and was confirmed by the New York State Senate in January 2016.

Shortly after being confirmed Judge DeFiore started the excellence initiative for all New York State Courts. This initiative is to achieve just and timely resolution of all matters pending before the courts.

It is an honor, a privilege and my pleasure to introduce our guest of honor, the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and the State of New York, my friend Janet DeFiore

***Remarks by: Chief Judge Janet DiFiore***

Thank you, Justice Berliner, for that very kind and lovely introduction. I'd like to thank everyone for making me feel so welcome, and all those responsible for putting this anniversary event together: President Andrea Composto, and the members of the Executive Committee, including my old friend, William Sherwood; and Executive Director Nancy Low-Hogan. Congratulations to you all!

I'm very happy to be back in Rockland County, where I certainly have a lot of good memories, and a lot of good friends, going back to my days as the Supervising Judge of the Criminal Courts for the 9th Judicial District.

One thing I learned as Supervising Judge, and which remains true to this day, is that you have a very special group of lawyers and judges here -- tight-knit, loyal, and truly dedicated to serving the justice needs of the litigants and communities of Rockland County.

And tonight, I'd like to take a few moments to talk about the fantastic work that is a product of that special synergy. By now, you are all aware of -- and many of you here tonight have even been working under the banner of -- our Excellence Initiative.

The Initiative was announced in February 2016 at Court of Appeals Hall during my Investiture.

In addition to the important responsibility of deciding cases at the Court of Appeals, the Excellence Initiative is my number one priority as Chief Judge for the foreseeable future. We are focused on improving the efficiency of court operations; speeding the justice process; and improving the quality of judicial decision-making in all of our trial courts, in order to give the people of our State the kind of fair, timely and high-quality justice services that they rightly expect and deserve.

Now, two and a half years later, we have a lot to be proud of, especially here in Rockland County, where we are making such remarkable progress, thanks to the leadership of Administrative Judge Kathie Davidson, and before her, Alan Scheinkman, as well as your recently retired Chief Clerk (and now Brigadier General) John Hussey. And most importantly, thanks to the hard work, commitment, support and cooperation of the judges, court staff and lawyers who deliver justice and practice law here in Rockland County.

Since the Excellence Initiative began:

- The pending felony caseload in Rockland County has been cut in half; and the number of cases pending over standards and goals is down to just a single case. Remarkable progress!
- The pending civil caseload in Rockland Supreme has been reduced by 24%, and the percentage of cases that are pending over standards and goals has been cut by 45%.
- And in Family Court, this County has made extraordinary progress, with the caseload cut by 35%, and only 2% of the cases over standards and goals. An extraordinary service to the children and families in this County.

No matter how you measure our performance, our courts here in Rockland, and all around the State, have become more efficient and productive.

And what lies behind the numbers really tells the true story. We are, without question, providing better, smarter and more efficient services to our "consumers." And we are using all tools and means available to us, including leveraging technology in thoughtful ways. For example, we have transformed the Rockland Family Court into a fully paperless court. And very soon we will be launching a Remote Temporary Order of Protection program in Rockland County, which will allow victims of domestic violence to file ex parte petitions from safe locations and appear in court through Skype technology.

Of course, none of this progress would be possible without the strong relationships and open lines of communication that exist between the Bar and the Bench here in Rockland County. And much of the credit is due to this Bar Association, which has its finger on the pulse of our courts and our communities and is so committed to doing its part to make us better in every way.

And let me assure you of one thing, I have been around long enough to know and understand that the wheels of justice cannot turn effectively or efficiently without the support, cooperation, and buy-in of the Bar. None of us can do our jobs effectively or bring about positive change alone. We can't move forward without the mutual support, cooperation and active participation of:

1. the lawyers who practice in our courts;
2. the judges and court staff who deliver justice;
3. the prosecutors;
4. defense providers;
5. and countless partner agencies whose work is directly implicated by what happens in our courtrooms and back offices.

I want to thank everyone here tonight for all of your hard work, your support, your collaboration, and your overarching interest in ensuring that the wheels of justice gently but firmly push our system forward.

Please allow me to close by congratulating my fellow honorees this evening: Richard A. Glickel, who is receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award; Lawrence A. Codispoti, who is receiving the Natalie Couch Award; and, finally, all of you, for your excellent service -- today and over the last 125 years.

## **LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: RICHARD A. GLICKEL, ESQ.**

### ***Introduction by: Mary Kay Rivera, Paralegal to Richard A. Glickel, Esq.***

Richard Glickel was destined to be an attorney. As a boy he wanted to fly jet planes, but poor vision forced him to abandon the idea. I like to remind him that it was just the universe intervening to set him on track to his true calling, The Law.

And that's not just my opinion. In the late 1980's we had the privilege to work with Judge Morrie Slifkin. I recall after a particularly involved discussion about a case, the Judge turned to me and said, "my boy (his pet name for Richard) gets it. He has a love and understanding of the law greater than most lawyers will ever have."

"He gets it" – is an opinion that has been shared with me by other jurists (and one or two of them are even here tonight). When asked why they felt that way, the judges were unanimous in their opinion that Richard was always prepared to appear before them, his dress and demeanor were appropriate – and yes, they even appreciated his "passion."

The principal law clerks that I have gotten to know over the years have also complimented Richard's work product; his ability to get to the point, support his position clearly and give them enough authority to assist the Court. One law clerk told me often that he had never seen anyone more prepared than Richard in his Judge's courtroom. He still says that Rick has a presence about him that makes the Court want to hear what he has to say. And, as long as he has known him, he never saw Richard resort to "smoke and mirrors" to make his case seem better than it actually was. Richard relies on the law and the facts and only the law and the facts. And to the appellate judges in the audience, I can tell you that Richard always enjoys the opportunity to appear before you.

Document presentation matters to him as much as in-court appearances. Richard has an obsession with making sure there isn't a space missing or added, that the grammar is perfect as are the margins and line spacing. And heaven forbid that the underlining, bold or italics is used incorrectly. His belief is that the Court and opposing counsel see him through his work product; and nothing that goes out under his name should allow them to think that a case is not important to him, he is giving it "short shrift" or that he is uncertain of his position.

Over the past 34 plus years, I've witnessed my share of Richard's "achievements"; like the case of a truck carrying municipal solid waste getting stuck in an underpass on the Palisades Parkway which started in the Clarkstown Justice Court and wound its way to the United States Supreme Court on a Commerce Clause issue. The town lost, but the ruling was altered years later – the dissenting opinion from our case had planted the seed for change.

As a Deputy Town Attorney for almost a quarter century, he counseled the largest town police department in the State of New York. His advice over the years resulted in some changes in policies and cost effective measures making that Department more successful. That success helped promote morale and increase efficiency within the Department.

Through that work Richard became expert in a difficult section of the General Municipal Law that continues to cost New York's local governments millions of taxpayer dollars each year for unnecessary or unworthy disability claims and, using that expertise, he's helped municipalities State-wide save money while more efficiently managing the process of returning employees to work or assisting in their retirements.

Richard has published law journal articles and traveled around NYS to speak at meetings and seminars on the subject and has authored amicus briefs in support of various municipalities.

All the while, Richard is running a successful one-man law firm; and to Richard there are no small cases.

For each client, his preparation never wavers – and when I say preparation, I'm talking about researching statutes, case law (both for and against the client's position), analyzing the relevant facts and information necessary for presenting a winning argument. When he meets a client for the first time, he speaks about their issue as if he has been along side them from the time the incident occurred. And he's

always “up front” with them about managing their expectations and whether the potential outcome of the case would justify the cost of the litigation.

In the office, I see “achievements” that aren’t seen by outsiders; time spent with, (but never billed to), an older gentleman who stopped into the office having just lost his wife and not knowing what to do first; fighting for the rights of someone who was subjected to an adverse employment action where the employer has sought to destroy an otherwise unblemished career; a nod to give a personal courtesy on his fee for newlyweds buying their first house on a shoestring – to name a few. For Richard, his profession has never been just a way to make “a living.” To him the law remains an honorable profession and he lives up to that standard each and every day.

Richard’s attributes include his respect for the judiciary and opposing counsel. One of his rules of personal conduct in practicing law is that no matter how intense the issue, the lawyers should always remain civil both during and after the case is ended. Like Shakespeare’s rival suitors in Taming of the Shrew, Richard believes that we should “Do as adversaries do in law, strive mightily, but eat and drink as friends.”

Richard has Chaired this Association’s ethics committee for years and he always has time to field the lawyers’ calls that come into the office and to discuss their ethics questions or concerns with them. It’s always been important to him to help his fellow attorneys practice with the very best information he can offer them.

When my then paralegal association worked to create a pro se matrimonial clinic and assist the Legal Aid Society of Rockland to reduce the number of cases it was handling, Richard immediately signed on as a supervising attorney for the clinics. He also helped us arrange for the Court to allow us to utilize the IAS system to assign all of cases from one clinic to one judge, so that we could more easily their status.

Support and involvement like that is something rare, special and much appreciated.

Richard was also active in the R.C.C. Paralegal Certificate Program, teaching business law and CPLR.

Outside of the law office, Richard served on the United Way and was Crusade Chair and Vice President for the local chapter of the American Cancer Society where he created the “Blue Hill Challenge” a fund-raising “10-k run” complete with a pre-race “carb load” dinner, as well as originating the annual Holiday gift-wrapping program at our largest shopping malls – and that annual fund raiser still exists today. He’s always wants to have a positive impact in whatever does.

In April 1997, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and when I walked into the office the day after getting that bad news, Richard informed me that he had already arranged for me to go for second opinions with the Chiefs of Breast Surgery, Pathology and Radiation at Memorial Sloan Kettering in Manhattan. I was lucky in my recovery and through it all, Richard was one of my staunchest supporters. I will always love him for that.

So it is with a great deal of professional and personal pride and admiration, that I introduce to you tonight’s recipient of the Rockland County Bar Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award – my boss, one of my best friends, and, in my not-so-humble opinion, one of the best attorneys in New York State, Richard A. Glickel.

***Remarks by: Richard A. Glickel, Esq.***

The late Sen. John McCain begins his final memoir, The Restless Wave, describing his having been overcome by “accumulated memories” during the occasion of a military ceremony.

I can understand that rush of emotion.

Forty-four years! Wow!!

Some of you have known me from the start – Jim Mellion and I took the lawyers’ oath together in Brooklyn. Even before that, I knew then ADA Gerry Damiani when I interned in the Public Defender’s office during the Summer of ‘71. Jim Freeman and Brian Sichel can remember me as Dave Silverman’s apprentice. I was fortunate to have for my early mentors Dave, (a past recipient of this same honor), Bob

Granik, Bill Nelson and the late Ralph Joseph.

For over four decades I have worked – and played – mostly with lawyers and jurists. I’ve enjoyed the company.

You may have read in this evening’s journal of my bar association activities; but, I was also the unofficial “chair” – instigator is more like it – of a secret sub-committee we called the “Intoxicated Young Lawyers of Rockland County.” A few of those chili-eating, beer drinkers – who shall remain nameless – survive and are with us this evening. You know who you are.

Legal practice is really the only “full-time job” I’ve ever had. The law-related relationships and professional affiliations I’ve experienced have been rewarding. And I trust you can all appreciate just what a truly humbling experience it is for me to receive our Association’s “Lifetime Achievement” award.

For me, at least, it’s difficult to envision any higher honor than to obtain the recognition of one’s peers. For this, I thank you.

The many judges here would agree that there are times when certain practitioners – and not just the uninitiated – simply don’t know when to “rest their case”; that is, when to stop talking and sit down.

This was effectively impressed upon me years ago when I rose to respond to an appeal that was especially devoid of merit. After my customary salutation – “May it please the court, etc.” – and, as I was about to proceed, the presiding justice said, “We’ve got it counselor.”

I assumed I had misheard the judge; surely the panel was anxious to witness my skilled disassembling of appellant’s argument. I returned to my notebook and as I was about to deliver the most astute and memorable words yet spoken at 45 Monroe Place, Judge Mangano repeated, “Counsel, we got it!”

I looked up, nodded knowingly at the judge and thought that I might skip the salient facts and start in the middle of the thing. I flipped through a page or two of my notes, but before I could say another word, Judge Mangano now inquired firmly, “Mr. Glickel, are you trying to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory?”

At which point I closed my notebook, thanked the panel and made my respectful retreat from the courtroom.

Now, I would ask our Chief Judge to assist my exit by repeating Judge Mangano’s advice – (spoken by Judge DiFiore), “COUNSEL, WE GOT IT!”

Thank you, your Honor.

Thanks everyone, and enjoy the rest of the evening.

## **NATALIE COUCH AWARD: LAWRENCE A. CODISPOTI, ESQ.**

*Introduction by: Robert J. Prier, Esq.*

*Remarks by: Lawrence A. Codispoti, Esq.*

For the first 15 years of my professional career, I had the distinct pleasure of practicing law with Belle Mayer Zeck at my former firm in Suffern. As many of you know, Belle was one of a kind: a genuine trailblazer for women attorneys in Rockland County. Belle was also a former President of our Association, having been elected in 1969.

As a result people would mistakenly congratulate Belle for being our first woman President. But Belle would always politely but firmly explain that no she was not, that Natalie Couch was the first.

So, I had heard of Natalie Couch from Belle, but never really knew much about her at all. It was only after I was selected to receive the Natalie Couch Award that I learned all about her truly remarkable life.

Thanks to the research of John Patrick Schutz and Bill Batson, I would like to share some of the ground

breaking highlights of Natalie Couch's life with you:

Natalie was born in Nyack and graduated from Wellsley College in 1907 and continued onto Fordham Law School where she graduated first in her class. She then became Rockland County's first woman attorney.

In 1918, when a local initiative passed allowing women to vote in Rockland County, Natalie Couch was the first woman to cast a legal vote. She organized the first women's Republican Club in New York State immediately following the passage of universal women's suffrage in 1920. While maintaining a law office in Nyack, she would also go on to become Journal Clerk to the New York Assembly (another "first woman" achievement for her) and be law secretary to NYS Supreme Court Justice Arthur S. Tompkins. She was nominated by the Republican Party and ran for the State Assembly as early as 1934 (*and was defeated by another woman, Democrat Caroline O'Day who had the support of Eleanor Roosevelt, in the first woman vs. woman US election*).

In 1940, Natalie was the Republican candidate for County Court Judge here in Rockland. Although unsuccessful in the general election, it was another milestone for her.

In her 66 years, she would become the first woman elected President of the Rockland County Bar Association in 1937 (32 yrs. Before Belle Zeck) the first woman to be Vice-Chair of the Rockland County Republican Committee, and the Police Justice for Grandview-on-Hudson. She was considered a key member of the election committees of Governor Thomas E. Dewey and the failed Presidential bid of Wendell Wilkie, She was hosting a "Citizens for Eisenhower" rally in Nanuet when she was stricken with a fatal heart attack in 1956. In a story about her death, *The New York Times* would call her "New York State Republican Leader." Her law office at Couch Court would become from 1942 to 1951 the Town Hall for all of Orangetown, and the Supreme Court of New York met there several times. During the time that she was the only female lawyer in Rockland she had two male lawyers as employees of her practice.

Natalie is an inspiration to all who faced discrimination and other difficult obstacles in achieving their goals. If Natalie could achieve all she did so can they.

It is truly my great honor to receive this award that recognizes the many accomplishments of Natalie Couch.