

My Experience As An Ellerin Fellow

By Annie Nazarian

Receiving a Justice Betty Weinberg Ellerin Fellowship has been the most enriching experience of my law school career. It gave me the opportunity to work during the fall 2009 semester with the Honorable Carol Edmead, an excellent judge and a wonderful person, and her law clerks, Elenor Reid and Joy Thompson, who are as hard-working and motivated as the Judge herself. The Fellowship allowed me to see the inner workings of the New York State court system and exposed me to litigation in different areas of the law. My workload consisted mostly of drafting orders and opinions, but I was also able to observe the judge's communications with attorneys during hearings and conferences. Everyone in the judge's chambers was friendly and helpful, supportive of my educational pursuits, and willing to accommodate my demanding law school schedule. Additionally, the Justice and her clerks took their mentoring roles seriously and were always willing to take the time to answer my questions. My understanding of the litigation process was enhanced significantly, and the wealth of knowledge that I gained from the overall experience was extensive.

As an Ellerin Fellow, I had the opportunity to work directly on several motions filed with the court. These motions included procedural issues such as motions to transfer venue, to reargue, to impose sanctions and to compel arbitration, and as a result I became much more familiar with New York's procedural laws. I also worked on several motions to dismiss that involved more substantive issues, such as the scope of complaints under New York State's whistleblower statute for medical practitioners and what actions are considered retaliatory under the statute. Justice Edmead made sure to give me meaningful research assignments that were challenging, and as a result, I greatly improved my legal research, writing, and judgment skills.

On the first day of my fellowship, after meeting with the judge's clerks to learn about the position and what was expected of me, I was handed memoranda from opposing parties on a motion to reargue a decision in their case. Ms. Reid told me to analyze the motion and to draft a proposed order. I was immediately intimidated and was not sure if I knew how to analyze that case. I remember thinking, Am I qualified to do this? After nervously reading the memoranda, I began to read the cases each party had cited. Eventually, after asking Ms. Reid about a million questions, I was able to draft an order. Although the process remained challenging throughout the entire semester, my apprehension and nervousness subsided with each order and opinion I drafted. As I conducted my research, Ms. Reid was always available to answer my questions, guide me and teach me how to focus on the important legal issues in each case. She and Justice Edmead gave me extensive feedback on my written work and explained their edits.

A typical day during my fellowship included reading the parties' memoranda on the motion to which I was assigned, researching the cited cases and doing any additional research necessary to help the judge reach a decision. By reading and researching opposing briefs, I learned the art of persuasive writing and saw how good organization, strong arguments articulated through clear writing, and proper supporting documentation can affect the outcome of a motion or an entire case. Justice Edmead and her clerks taught me how to chart the moving party's argument and the opposing side's response to that specific argument and to

organize the background information and facts relied on by each party in order to effectively analyze the opposing arguments. I also improved my own persuasive writing and speaking skills and became better prepared to give status updates to the judge's clerks.

Law school students are constantly discussing how almost all cases settle before trial. Although only a tiny percentage of cases go to trial, I was surprised by the extraordinary number of pending cases that make up Justice Edmead's caseload. Even more surprising to me was how familiar Justice Edmead and her clerks were with the details of each case. Each case, no matter how large or small, was handled with the same high standard of professionalism and care.

I want to thank the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation for sponsoring the Ellerin Fellowship and allowing me to have such a wonderful opportunity. My fellowship experience with the Honorable Carol Edmead has been, by far, the most rewarding and enjoyable experience in my law school career. Going into chambers was an interesting and enjoyable learning experience, far different from learning in a classroom. Aside from invaluable insights into the inner workings of the judicial process, I established invaluable personal relationships with the Justice and her clerks that were the highlight of my clerkship experience.

Annie Nazarian is a 3L at New York University School of Law and a graduate of UCLA.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED -- NYWBA Survey of Manhattan Law Firms

The Committee to Advance the Status of Women is seeking volunteers to contact law firms and to help coordinate Survey initiation and completion. Committee also needs volunteers to write Spotlight columns, highlighting how law firms support their women attorneys (several firms have volunteered to be profiled).

Anyone interested should contact Brenda Pomerance at 212-245-3940 or survey@nywba.org.

SAVE THE DATE!

The New York Women's Bar Association

75th Anniversary Gala and Annual Dinner

Honoring

HON. SHERRY KLEIN HEITLER

Administrative Judge, New York County Supreme
Court with the President's Special Award

and

HON. FLORENCE PERLOW SHIENTAG

(1909-2009), Founder, Past President and Benefactor

June 10, 2010, 6 PM

Capitale, 130 Bowery, NYC

Invitation to follow