

Birthdays, Weddings And In Between: RBG And Her Clerks

By **Aebra Coe**

Law360 (September 20, 2020, 8:29 PM EDT) -- Ruth Bader Ginsburg's onetime clerk Karl Remón Thompson says that clerking for the jurist felt very much like being part of a family.

Thompson, now a partner at Jones Day who clerked for Ginsburg in 2002, said that when he clerked for her she had her chambers on the second floor of the court, rather than the first floor as is customary, because she liked having her office in the same suite as her assistants and clerks.

He remembers sitting with her in her office, going over the meticulous changes she had suggested for a draft document.

"She always made these exchanges feel like collaboration rather than taking direction," he said. "She was exacting with her work, and an incredibly hard worker. But I also found her deeply appreciative of her clerks' help, and generous with her praise."

In fact, Ginsburg was the officiant at his wedding.

"She was delighted to officiate at my wedding—as she did for many other former clerks and friends — and to hear updates about my children. And she always gave thoughtful professional advice and assistance, sometimes without my even having to ask," he said.

Justice Ginsburg, who passed away Friday evening at age 87, served as an associate justice on the U.S. Supreme Court from 1993 until her death, leaving behind a monumental legal legacy that includes a mountain of work both as a litigator and as a jurist securing equal rights under the law for women, among others.

During her time on the court Justice Ginsburg hired dozens of law clerks, some of whom shared their stories of their interactions with her with Law360 over the weekend. The passion she displayed when it came to equality and fairness were integral elements of her personality that came through in other areas of her life as a mentor and a boss, they said.

WilmerHale partner Tom Saunders, who clerked for Ginsburg in 2006, says Justice Ginsburg enjoyed throwing birthday parties for everyone in chambers, catered by her husband Marty's "exquisite baking."

"It was the privilege of a lifetime to get to know the woman behind the legend. Soft-spoken and careful in choosing her words, Justice Ginsburg was all business on the bench. But behind the velvet curtains, she was

warm and caring," Saunders said.

Joe Palmore, a partner at Morrison & Foerster LLP, said he was able to learn vitally important life lessons both from Justice Ginsburg directly and through her relationship with her husband, Marty, who died in 2010. The two, he says, had an "exemplary" marriage of two equal partners and parents.

"Through the decades as she navigated an overwhelmingly male and sexist legal profession on her way to its very top, Marty was her biggest cheerleader," Palmore said. "Decades later, this high-powered, loving partnership was on full display to us law clerks."

He says Justice Ginsburg cheered his plan to be his son's primary caregiver while his wife finished her medical residency, encouraged him to get home in time for dinner with his son, and taught him "by showing me how to be a lawyer, spouse and parent."

In addition to warm memories of the close relationships they formed with her, Ginsburg's clerks also reflected on how she has served as a role model to those who knew her and strangers alike as a result of her career accomplishments, which included breaking into a male-dominated space in the law.

Munger Tolles & Olson LLP partner Ginger Anders, who clerked for Justice Ginsburg in 2004, says the jurist served as an inspiration to her as a female lawyer and showed the world that women could argue and win the big cases.

"[She] showed future generations of women lawyers what was possible — that we too could stand up before the Supreme Court, that we could find our own ways of being persuasive advocates, and that we could and should persist in advancing justice through the law," Anders said.

Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP partner Daniel Rubens reflected back to when he clerked for the justice six years ago.

He remembered her sitting down to patiently explain to him each improvement to a draft opinion he had written, celebrating his and other clerks' personal milestones, inviting them to operas and musical performances and warmly greeting their families, loved ones and friends.

"Justice Ginsburg was someone who cared deeply," Rubens said. "The care, dedication and dignity with which Justice Ginsburg approached the law — and life — inspire me each day to work toward [a] more just future."

Ultimately, Justice Ginsburg's passion in her career was a direct result of her passionate care for people, according to Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP counsel David B. Toscano.

"Justice Ginsburg's ambitions for the law are about people, not abstractions," Toscano said.

Her passing is "an enormous loss to the country, and especially to those of us fortunate to have been touched by her personally," he added.

--Editing by Pamela Wilkinson.