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An Ode to Nancy Sabol's Competence

SCOTT DOUGLAS GERBER*

We all have pet peeves. One of mine is unjustified arrogance: when people who are not talented act like they know everything and are always right. Arrogance is bad enough, but *unjustified* arrogance drives me up the wall. Is Warren Buffet arrogant? I have never met him, so I cannot answer that question. I hope he is not. But if he were, at least he would have reason to be: he is almost certainly the greatest stock picker in the history of America.¹ Is Clarence Thomas arrogant? Like Buffet, Thomas has reason to be: he has served on the U.S. Supreme Court for three decades, and he is only the second African-American to have done so. I have met Justice Thomas, and I am pleased to report that he is not arrogant. He is about as down-to-earth as a person can possibly be.²

Nancy Sabol was not arrogant, but she had reason to be. No person in my two decades at Ohio Northern—not a single one—did more to improve the College of Law—to keep it from shuttering, to be candid about it—than Nancy Sabol. The success our students enjoyed on the bar examination would not have been possible, literally, without Nancy's talent for bringing out the best in the students while they were studying for the exam. That fact was so obvious that I had a long-running joke I would share with Nancy every time the bar exam results were announced: In the seemingly never-ending years of financial struggles for ONU, Nancy was the only person on the campus who could have demanded a pay raise from the administration. Where is the joke? It is here: I would always tell Nancy that I would serve as her agent during those salary negotiations . . . and that I would take 10% off the top.

Nancy never played the competence card. She was not arrogant enough to do it. That is not to say that she did not know she was good at her job:

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1. See, e.g., ALICE SCHROEDER, *THE SNOWBALL: WARREN BUFFETT AND THE BUSINESS OF LIFE* (2008).

2. See, e.g., SCOTT DOUGLAS GERBER, *FIRST PRINCIPLES: THE JURISPRUDENCE OF CLARENCE THOMAS* (expanded ed., 2002); Scott Douglas Gerber, *Clarence Thomas has had a lasting impact on Black history in America*, THE HILL (Feb. 12, 2019) available at <https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/429700-clarence-thomas-has-had-a-lasting-impact-on-black-history-in-america>; CLARENCE THOMAS, *MY GRANDFATHER'S SON: A MEMOIR* (2007); *Created Equal: Clarence Thomas in His Own Words* (Documentary, 2020).

the twinkle in her eyes and the sly smile on her face when I told her the same joke year after year after year let me know that she knew it.

Others have said beautiful things about how nice a person Nancy was. I agree with those sentiments. However, in this tribute I wanted to address how much I admired how good she was at her job. Of course, like everyone else I am saddened by Nancy's premature death, and my thoughts and prayers go out to everyone who loved her, especially to her husband Don and their kids—now young adults—Daniel and Anne. But I am happy that the last Ohio bar examination with which Nancy helped the students resulted in a 21-for-21, 100% pass rate that placed our College of Law at the top of the heap among all Ohio law schools. As I mentioned during my monthly TV segment shortly after the July 2019 results were announced, Ohio State might have wiped the field with ONU in football, but with Nancy Sabol as the Director of our Academic Support Program, we kicked the Buckeyes' butts on the bar exam.³

Goodbye, Nancy. And thank you.

3. See *The Bar Exam!*, WLIO-TV (Nov. 7, 2019) available at https://www.hometownstation.com/the-bar-exam/video_15a2b3b1-ac6a-57de-8a5f-49c5cade3029.html (TV segment about the July 2019 bar exam results).