

THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

'In Re Telesca v. Caparco,' Part 72

There was a time when walking down to the Four Corners meant you likely would resolve three different files, because it was impossible to walk there without running into scores of other attorneys.

As other firms escaped to the suburbs, our firm remained Downtown, its home since the moment my dad started practicing in 1953.

As I mentioned in a recent column, he opened his own office after he worked for the great trial lawyer Sid Davidson in the Powers Building. At that time, he was in the Elwood Building, where the Crossroads Building now stands and where ChamberlainD'Amanda is located.

There is a great story about Sid Davidson pacing when his cousin, Sidney Bernstein — the father of Dick Bernstein — was pacing while a jury was deliberating a personal injury case Davidson had referred to Bernstein.

"Why are you so anxious?" he was asked. "You have juries out on murder cases all the time."

"Yeah, but this is important!" Davidson replied.

The Hon. Michael A. Telesca remembers those days fondly and recently recalled that "the legal community was centered here. We had more fun and we helped each other out.

"Lawyers helped each other through hard financial times and, if someone had a question about how to handle a file, we'd all share information. We all worked together."

He went on to explain that he and my dad, and many other attorneys, would meet on Friday nights at the Powers Grill. He told me a great story about Willie Caparco, who was at ChamberlainD'Amanda, and would pay the waitress to have him paged throughout the evening: "Telephone call for Willie Caparco!"

Judge Telesca said that he and Pete Connelly kept asking Caparco what it was costing him to be paged, but Caparco simply would say, "Oh, I know who that is, I'm not going to get it" whenever the page rang out over the loud speakers.

Judge Telesca's office was on the Seventh floor of the Union Trust Building, and he could see the lawyers walking to calendar call each morning. One morning he arranged for Pete Connelly to walk to court with Willie Caparco. He watched, and called the phone booth just as the pair walked by. On queue, Connelly answered the phone in the booth, turned to Caparco and said "It's for you."

"It can't be," Caparco said.

"Yes, they're paging you everywhere."

Judge Telesca still laughs about that one today.

As time passed, my dad's practice grew and, since getting out of law school, my offices have always been located near the Four Corners. After moving from Old City Hall in 1996, I have been one block away from the Four Corners at Liberty Plaza, 31 E. Main St., in the space formerly occupied by Sutton DeLeeuw. It's right next to the river, and a stone's throw from both the Powers Building and the old Elwood Building. As I age, it seems some things truly are cyclical.

Ed Hanley, the lawyer who used to have my partner Shelly Boyce's office, came though our suite for a tour last week. It had been many years since he was here with Sutton DeLeeuw, and it was great to see Ed again. He told us that from his desk here he was able to see Charlie G., aka Charles Doe — the name has been changed to protect the guilty — when Charlie was at his desk in the Powers Building. He would sometimes call Ed and ask him if he could see him while they were talking to each other on the telephone.

One day, Ed said that he could.

"Great!" Charlie said, and then he mooned him.

I used to be able to see Sam Yarslow across the parking lot at Lacy Katzen while we were talking on our phones to other people — but I never thought of that one.

The Four Corners never was a boring spot. In the late '70s, Shelly's former partner, Lou D'Amanda, was confronted, simultaneously, by a demand for all his money, and the business end of a handgun, while in a parking garage. Before the crook knew what in the heck was happening, Lou pulled out his own gun and got the drop on the would-be robber. After Lou fired a warning shot, the guy ran away, and Lou chased him down the street, still holding his gun.

Some years later, Shelly and Lou were in a settlement conference with Supreme Court Justice Wilmer Patlow when the plaintiff's attorney complained that Lou's offer was unreasonably low.

"Are you kidding? He won't give you money even if you point a gun at him," Judge Patlow said.

On another occasion, Dick Bernstein told Judge Patlow not to tell him what to settle his case for because they had taken torts together in law school and Dick got a higher grade.

Recently here at 31 E. Main St., I received a call that cracked me up. For those of you who know Tom Burke, you understand he is a zealous and worthy adversary with whom you can lock horns but later resume a cordial friendship, sort of like in the old days when lawyers saw each other every day at the Four Corners.



By **ROBERT L. BRENN JR.**

Daily Record
Columnist

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Tom called me up and said that the tree branches were covering the time and temperature clock out front, and he could not tell what the temperature was. He asked me to go find out for him. I put him on hold and went out to check the time and temperature. When I got back to my desk, I reported all relevant information to him.

You see, you may not notice it immediately, but some lawyers do have a sense of humor.

Two attorneys I know just moved back Downtown, and I feel we finally are on the verge of resurgence.

In fact, Shelly just had clients turn down a home visit because they said they'd rather come Downtown. That is good.

If I can knock off three files every day at lunch, maybe I'll have more time to write better columns.

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