

Keep Smiling

BY SHELLI FEDULLO

Among the reasons I am thrilled to walk around without a mask is that for the first in a very long time I was able to smile at a “stranger” who smiled back. That brief connection felt lovely. It always does. It is a moment of shared humanity.

My mother, Thelma, of blessed memory, enjoyed telling me about how, when I was little, I never took the whole “be careful of strangers” thing to heart and constantly smiled at everyone all of the time. This, she reasoned, increased the likelihood of me being snatched away, which, she further reasoned, created the absolute necessity for her to always watch me like a hawk, a practice she continued pretty much until I was eligible for Medicare. I am sad about how much I miss that, but I also smile. Smiling can be complicated.

As I think about it, smiling was a gift from my beloved Thelma. Growing up, and growing older, always enveloped and protected by her love, made me feel secure and optimistic about the world and my place in it. My single mother rarely had an extra penny to spare, but I grew up with riches—smiling was easy.

We smile when we are happy, but there is more to it. There is depth, complexity, and nuance in smiling. We may not be jumping for joy this very minute, and we may not feel we have much to smile about.

But in smiling we are reminded of and share our faith and trust in one another, as well as in ourselves. There is power and bravery when we smile. It is food for the spirit. As I sit at my computer writing



my final column as editor-in chief of *The Philadelphia Lawyer*, I am smiling, and hope that you take a moment to find something to smile about and that it feels lovely.

“Hymie the Lawyer” was my original family connection to the practice of law. Hymie was the nephew of Eita, who was married to my grandfather’s brother. The “connection” was very attenuated—I don’t

think I ever met him. Entering the practice of law was not part of my family legacy or even something I considered as an option until my mid-20s. But, here I am, a lawyer married to a lawyer, and the very proud mother of another lawyer. Although the three of us are in very different practices at different firms, I guess it is fair to say that law is our family business, and we are not alone. In our feature piece this edition, 13 lawyers from seven different families: Sayde, David, and Hillary Ladov; Joe Torregrossa; Saul and Dave Langsam; Emmanuel and Jane Iheukwumere; David and Ken Grunfeld (with a special “guest appearance” by Ken’s 10th grade son, Nate); Tim and Dan Lawn; and Steve LaCheen; share their experiences and perspectives. In a related piece, “The List,” incoming *TPL* editor-in-chief, Albert S. Dandridge III, provides a compelling narrative of the “generational history” of Black attorneys in Philadelphia.

Those of us who are part of lawyer families have either built-in mentors or the wonderful opportunity to mentor. If you are interested in being a mentor or finding one, please visit the Philadelphia Bar Association website and sign up. The Mentoring and Professional Development Initiative, which I chair along with Jen Coatsworth and Regina Foley, matches attorneys looking for help and guidance with those who want to provide it. This is open to all, on a rolling basis. As we receive requests Jen,

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Regina, and I “convene”—as often as necessary—to help lawyers who want help find lawyers who are there to help. From personal experience, I can tell you that being a mentor is terrific.

During 2019, in my monthly “Chancellor” columns in the *Philadelphia Bar Reporter* and in four editions of this magazine, I have had the wonderful opportunity to share my thoughts with you, and I thank you for reading. Before I sign off and make my way down to the bottom of the *TPL* masthead, I thank our amazing communications team—Rachel Kipp, Brittany Robertson, and Wes Terry. I thank my dear friends and colleagues on the Editorial Board for their dedication to, and yes, even

love, for this magazine. Being a Philadelphia lawyer is a privilege we all share, and it has been a privilege to serve as editor-in-chief of *The Philadelphia Lawyer*. Another reason to smile.

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