

Q&A > department

Gregory J. Scandaglia

Age: 48

Family: He and his wife, Karyn Glass, have two sons, Cole, 17, and Ryan, 14.

Education: He graduated from State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1983, and the Washington College of Law — American University in 1986.

Professional: In January 2001, he launched his own litigation firm, which today is Scandaglia & Ryan. He has extensive litigation experience representing clients in anti-trust, commercial real estate disputes, computer technology, product liability, telecommunications, white-collar defense, patent, trademark, and contract law.

1. Why did you become a lawyer?

Because poets starve.

I liked to write and I thought that's what I wanted to do. I didn't see that there were that many opportunities, so I wanted to find something that would be changing. I think that was a big thing. A job, a profession that would allow me to learn different industries and get involved in changing subject-matter areas. I didn't want to just be committed to a single subject-matter area, and do that consistently for a whole career. That's really, I think, one of the very good things about our profession that, depending upon who has a dispute,

who's calling in, the underlying subject matter could be anything. It gives you an opportunity to learn about a whole new business or a whole new industry or a whole new area.

I also liked the idea of getting involved in disputes and trying to bring a conclusion. ... I also wanted to do something in the public sector, and so I was with the Justice Department for the first six years of my career, from

'86 to '92. I worked for the antitrust division of the Justice Department. That was a good opportunity for a while to do something in the public interest, to get experience early, and it still had that very good quality of being very interesting in terms of subject matter. ...

2. If you could have lunch with anyone, living or dead, who would it be and why?

My great-grandmother came to the United States on a ship from Italy, and her husband had already arrived here and found a place to live and a job. When she came, she came by herself with four kids riding in the steerage section of this ocean liner. I would love to be able to sit down and talk to her about what that trip was like. My grandfather was 3, and she was carrying an infant. ... They arrived on Christmas Eve on Ellis Island. In fact, the infant she was carrying, my great-grandfather had not yet met because he was in Italy and then left to try to set up what would be their new home in Brooklyn, and she had the baby in Italy while he was in New York. On Christmas Eve this ship arrives at Ellis Island and he is reunited with his wife, his three children — my grandfather, being, I think, 3 years old at the time — and then an infant daughter that he had never even seen yet. ...

3. What is your favorite book, movie, television show, or play about lawyers and why?

I guess I have to go with "12 Angry Men." For me, as a trial lawyer, what goes on in a jury room, I'm not permitted to know. The idea of a movie that is letting you basically watch the deliberations in a criminal case is fascinating to me, and I think that movie presented that subject extremely well.

To watch as they considered certain pieces of evidence differently or were convinced that that piece of evidence meant one thing and then Henry Fonda presents another side of it. And also to see how the personal experiences of the jurors come rushing forward to affect their deliberations and the outcome of the case, I thought that was very, very well done and very, very interesting. ...

4. What advice do you have for new or future lawyers?

... I try to impress on young lawyers that [the legal community] is a lot smaller than they think it is. The Daley Center is enormous and

there are a million courtrooms and lots of cases going on, and you can forget pretty quick that when you're out there representing your client and representing the firm, people are going to remember what you do and say and how you carry yourself. ...

You have to be mindful of your reputation, and you have to be mindful always of what you say — your word is your bond out there. People are going to remember whether or not you lived up to the bargain you made with them. The judge is going to remember whether or not when he or she asked you about some aspect of your case or wanted to know, "Had this happened or not?" or "Was there case law on this subject?" That judge is going to remember whether or not you carefully answered that question truthfully or were you just trying to get some short-term advantage by saying whatever was expedient. My advice to young lawyers is to remember that they are building a reputation for themselves in what is a much smaller community than they think so they need to be true to their word. They need to have integrity. They need to work on having judges and opposing counsel and clients trust them and want to rely on them. ...

5. What's your favorite childhood vacation?

My favorite childhood vacation continues on to the present. When I was a kid growing up in New York we would go to the Catskill Mountains for a week every year in July. And it was really great — just out in the mountains, very slow-paced. You could have a lot of adventures out getting dirty, getting into mischief outside. Probably about 15 years ago my dad decided that we would start doing that again as a family.

So I have two older brothers who have children, and I have two sons, so we started going back to the Catskills every July for a week, which is a great time. ... Over the years it's been more of a challenge to find a place like the place we used to go to. ... But we've come close, especially the last couple years, we've come closer to replicating the original place. ...

6. What is your favorite Chicago restaurant?

There is an Italian restaurant in the Andersonville area called Anteprema. I think the Italian food there is wonderful. I'm a pretty tough critic about Italian restaurants, so that would be one of them. ■

By Olivia Clarke

