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Dean Logan's Blog

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and RWU Law

Posted by David Logan on 10/17/2013 at 04:40 PM

What a run for the RWU Law! In the past three years, four Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States have been in RI and presenting to our students (Justices Alito, Breyer, Kagan, and most recently O'Connor), not to mention meetings in Chambers in Washington with two others (Justices Ginsberg and Sotomayor).

Justice O'Connor's visit last week was especially meaningful; she broke the last glass ceiling of the legal profession when she was appointed to the High Court by President Ronald Reagan in 1981, and many women came up to me during her visit to say just how meaningful it was to actually meet such an important historical figure.

The Justice was very generous with her time: she participated in a "fireside chat" (albeit without the fire!) in our Appellate Courtroom, had coffee with a group of very lucky student leaders, and then signed copies of her books for a long line of students. Then, to top it off, she met with Judge Selya's "Lessons of Litigation" students.

There were many wonderful moments, but I will recount but two. The first involves her nomination to the Court: She was sitting in her chambers at the Arizona Court of Appeals when the phone rang; she answered it and the voice said:

"I am trying to reach Judge O'Connor."

"This is she."

"Please hold for the President of the United States."

President Reagan: "Sandra, I'd like to announce your nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court tomorrow. Is that alright with you?"

"I suppose that is fine."

The rest is, as they say, history.

The second special moment was the Justice's reunion with our own Professor Niki Kuckes, who before going to law school was an intern in Justice O'Connor's chambers. The two enjoyed pictures showing how the Justices, staff, and spouses looked 22 years ago.

Here are some pictures from Justice O'Connor's time with us.











