

REFLECTIONS ABOUT STANLEY FELDMAN

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Although I was acquainted with Chief Justice Feldman before then, I didn't get to know him well until he was appointed to the Arizona Supreme Court in 1982, replacing retired Justice Fred C. Struckmeyer. I had been serving on the Supreme Court for seven years at that point, and was still considered the "new kid on the block," as I was the most recent appointment to that court. The other members of the Court at that time were Justices Cameron, Hays and Holohan. All the members of the Court except Feldman had been trial judges before coming to the Supreme Court, and some members of the Phoenix legal community expressed concern that Stanley lacked that background.

Having been a solo judge in a small county, I knew what it was like to handle all kinds of cases. Stanley's main experience was in civil trial practice. He admitted he had little experience handling criminal, juvenile, probate, worker's compensation or mental health cases. We all expected that it would take some time for Stanley to become familiar with rules and procedures in those areas. What I am sure most were not prepared for was the rapidity with which Stanley mastered those judicial fields in which he had no prior experience. Stanley dived into each eagerly, immersing himself fully and enjoying the new challenges. He was up to speed with each of us after dealing with the very first case in each field. Stanley's hallmark while I was on the Court was that he was excited by new challenges and he handled them as though he were a veteran.

When he came, Stanley Feldman brought to the Supreme Court a wealth of trial lawyer's skills that were greatly needed. At the time of Stanley's appointment, I was the most recent from the practicing bar, which was over twenty years before. Stanley's sensitivity to the problems of trial lawyers in the courts was of invaluable assistance to the Supreme Court in its revisions of the rules of civil procedure and appellate rules. Both plaintiffs' and defense lawyers had an ardent advocate on their behalf in Stanley Feldman in our rules conferences for those revisions.

Over our years of working together on the Court I came to sense the reverence that Stanley Feldman has for the law and the courts as institutions. This reverence was apparent in his decisions. Stanley would not think of tendering to the Court a draft of an opinion that he was not satisfied with as the best research and writing effort possible at the time. He was and is a perfectionist in judicial craftsmanship.

When I was the Chief Justice and became aware that the House of Representatives of Arizona had voted a bill of impeachment against our then Governor Evan Mecham, I knew that I needed time to prepare myself and the Senate for the impending impeachment trial where I was to act as the Presiding Officer. I knew that this responsibility would take all of my time for several months, and that there probably would be legal and judicial challenges to the impeachment proceedings that the Arizona Supreme Court would be required to

deal with. Stanley Feldman was the Vice-Chief Justice of the Court at the time. I met with the Court in conference and advised them of my concerns that I would not be able to carry my share of the cases for some time, and that the Court would need to bring in other judges to carry my share of the case load, as well as to take my place in hearing cases involving impeachment issues. Stanley took over the helm of the Arizona Supreme Court during those hectic times, where the attention of all Arizonans was focused on the impeachment trial. Stanley guided the Supreme Court with honor and distinction. As I expected, Governor Mecham and his attorneys fired several legal challenges in the Supreme Court that directly or indirectly involved the impeachment trial. Each of these challenges was given a prompt hearing and clear decision. I was proud of the role of the Supreme Court in those proceedings, and of Stanley's leadership of the Court during this crucial period in our state's history. At all times while working with him on the Arizona Supreme Court, I valued Stanley's counsel and support.

Since then, while serving as Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court, Stanley Feldman has been as an extremely articulate and strong leader of the judiciary in Arizona in times of serious tensions among the three branches of government. As one who has felt those pressures, I can and do appreciate Stanley's abilities in that regard.

Of all of Stanley's outstanding scholarly and leadership character traits, however, none can surpass his complete devotion to the University of Arizona. He is in my opinion the ultimate Wildcat fan, with U of A basketball as his primary sports passion. Few will know how many hearings of the Arizona Supreme Court had to be arranged around his travel schedule so that he could follow the Wildcat team around the country. Although I haven't spoken to him about it since he returned, I am sure his lifelong ambition has been achieved since he was present with his beloved Wildcat team as they won the NCAA Basketball Championship in Indianapolis this spring. With that accomplished, I wonder how long it will take now-Chief Justice Zlaket to get Stanley off cloud nine and back to work. I expect it will take some time. My best to you, Stanley. We are all proud of you. Good luck in your work.