

Nova Law Review

Volume 34, Issue 3

2010

Article 8

Stephanie Aleong: A Brief Recollection and Tribute

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STEPHANIE ALEONG: A BRIEF RECOLLECTION AND TRIBUTE

JOEL A. MINTZ

I met Stephanie Feldman Aleong in the fall of 2003, when she interviewed for a position as an assistant professor in our law school's Lawyering Skills and Values Program. We were then looking for a candidate who was bright, hardworking, and enjoyed contact with students. We hoped that individual would be a good colleague, a positive role model for the students, and a benevolent influence in the school. My initial sense was that Stephanie would do well in all of those respects. I was wrong. Stephanie Aleong did not merely do good work in those—and all other—facets of her work. She was simply superb at them.

Stephanie was extraordinarily intelligent as a professor and lawyer. Her intelligence was not limited to her academic and legal abilities, however. She also possessed what is colloquially referred to as “people smarts:” an uncanny ability to hear what other people are saying, to understand what affects and motivates others, and to communicate directly (and helpfully) with everyone fortunate enough to come in contact with her.

Stephanie Aleong had remarkable energy and a great enthusiasm for working with her students. She cared, in sincere and inspiring ways, about their development and welfare, and she devoted immense amounts of her time to guiding them, both academically and (at times) personally, through their difficulties and travails. Stephanie's door was always open to her students. They knew they could always go to her for valuable academic guidance, sound advice, and (where appropriate) a needed word of sympathy and support or a firm push in the right direction. Many students took advantage of her availability to them. All who did benefitted enormously.

In addition, Stephanie was a first rate classroom teacher. Although slight in stature, during class meetings her liveliness, learning, and passion for her subject matter always filled the room. She prepared doggedly for those learning sessions and she expected her students to do the same—consistently holding them to high standards, but never belittling those who were slower to grasp the points she was conveying.

Stephanie was also a highly skilled lawyer. Before entering academia, she had been a successful prosecutor who specialized in rape cases and matters involving counterfeit medications. In that role, she was notably tough but fair. Stephanie's knowledge of the pharmaceutical business and the laws it is subject to was encyclopedic, and she used that knowledge to good effect, protecting many lives in the process. Indeed, Stephanie's work to protect the

public from phony medicines was nationally known, and she was well respected for it by her allies and adversaries alike. Stephanie's groundbreaking efforts in this area continued even after she left full time legal practice. She was a popular speaker and an influential writer on the topic throughout her all too brief academic career.

Stephanie Aleong was a marvelous colleague as well. She participated in both committee meetings and faculty gatherings thoughtfully and (sometimes) passionately. Although she was not diffident about sharing her views on various faculty matters, she also listened carefully to the views of others; and she was unfailingly respectful to those who disagreed with her perspective. It was always a delight to serve on faculty committees with Stephanie. She was someone you could always depend on to make helpful suggestions and to do at least her fair share of the work—and often far more than that. No task was too great or too small for Stephanie. She had a zest for getting the job done, and her cheerful willingness to stay on track, and see the work through, was very frequently contagious.

Beyond all of this, Stephanie Aleong was a warm and caring human being. She was devoted to her husband Neil and the other members of her family, who looked to her often for love and support. She loved her friends, her pets, good music, and good food. Her untimely passing left many who knew her with a deep and lasting sense of loss. Her memory remains an inspiration and a blessing.