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Professor Stephanie Aleong: More than My Professor and Mentor - My Friend

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PROFESSOR STEPHANIE ALEONG: MORE THAN MY PROFESSOR AND MENTOR—MY FRIEND

ANTHONY M. STELLA

Professor Stephanie Feldman Aleong taught me legal writing during my first year of law school. But, to me, and to most students she encountered, she was more than a professor. She was a mentor and friend.

Professor Aleong had an inexplicable ability to challenge her students' minds and touch their hearts. She inspired her students to work hard and grow intellectually, while simultaneously encouraging them to chase their passions and follow their dreams. She also molded her students into both better attorneys and better people.

How did she do accomplish this unbelievable feat? By example.

As a professor, her relentless work ethic exemplified the inexorable commitment to professional excellence she bestowed on her students. Without rue, she demanded her students study, study some more, and, if we had any free time, study something we liked. She accepted no excuse for laziness. It was not tolerated. Period.

She also deeply cared for the integrity of her students. She was a pundit of professionalism. To her, results mattered, but the means were as important as the end. She cautioned her students against losing sight of their moral compass and jeopardizing their ethical stature for the sake of individual accolades. She reminded us to balance our morality with our accomplishments, giving equal weight to both. She encouraged us to never lose sight of our humanity and to remember that we are people who should not only respect our fellow man, but ourselves.

In the end, it was Professor Aleong's compassionate disposition for the personal well-being of her students that endeared her to so many. Please don't misunderstand me. She was just as austere as the toughest professor when it came to her students' grading and quality of work (my lowest grade during my first year of law school was in legal writing). But, unlike some professors, who are justifiably cautious when it comes to student relationships, she expressed a warm, heartfelt empathy for the many anxiety ridden law students whom she perpetually taught and advised. Her door was always open. With a warm smile and a bowl full of candy, she actively listened to student concerns, offering well-thought-out advice and feasible solutions. No problem was too big. No concern too small. Everything that mattered to you mattered to her. You mattered.

For me, Professor Aleong ("Professor A" as I came to call her) had a special place in my heart before her unexpected passing. Through divine

patience and perseverance, she helped mold me into the person and professional I am today. She never gave up on me, even when I disappointed her—although she never told me that and always said how proud she was of me. At my lowest moments, she was there to support and encourage me. I will miss her, as she was more than my professor and mentor—she was my friend.