

Remarks on the Investiture of Justice Slaughter

by Debra McVicker Lynch, United States Magistrate Judge

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May it please the Court: Chief Justice Rush, Justice Rucker, Justice David, Justice Massa, Lt. Governor Holcomb, distinguished guests; colleagues, friends, and family of Justice Slaughter:

When my dear friend first asked me to speak at his investiture today, he described that my charge would be to “introduce [him] to the court.” I found that a charming fiction, considering that he’s been on the court for two months now. But the more I thought about it, the more appropriate it seemed, and so I decided to embrace fully the task of introducing Justice Slaughter to his new colleagues on the Court.

I won’t spend time reciting the accomplishments included in his biography, though they demonstrate the aptness of his appointment.

Rather, I believe I should approach the introduction of Justice Slaughter to his new colleagues with this observation in mind. It’s an observation not original to me, but I have certainly seen its truth in my own experience. And that observation is that a court—meaning the judges and staffs that serve the court—is like a *family*. The working relationships among members of a court can take on the dynamics of a family, and members of that judicial family sometimes settle into various familial roles. And when a new member joins that family, the family dynamics and roles

and relationships may shift a bit. So with that in mind, I want to share with Your Honors some things you should know about your new brother.

I've learned these things because I had the good fortune of working closely with Geoff at Sommer Barnard—now Taft—from the time he joined the firm in 2001 to my appointment as a magistrate judge in 2008. And I've had the even greater good fortune of being his friend for the last 15 years.

First, I think it's critical that I tell you right away about Brother Slaughter's strange affliction. I probably should have contacted you sooner. When you circulate the draft of an opinion to him, do not be alarmed if he starts shaking and hyperventilating. It probably will not become a major medical emergency. Rather, it's just that your opinions are published in Times New Roman font. Justice Slaughter is keenly attentive to fonts—well, actually, he is *obsessed* with fonts, and Times New Roman is decidedly *not* his preferred font. But in time, I expect he will be able to adjust to this particular family custom. And indeed it may ultimately be a time saver to have such things institutionally established. If Justice Slaughter were choosing and policing your fonts, it would take *hours and hours* longer to prepare opinions for filing.

You've no doubt noticed in the two months since Justice Slaughter joined your family that he is unfailingly courteous, generous, and considerate. He assumes the best about everyone. This is not temporary. He's not simply on his best behavior in his new professional home. This is who he is. The two of us have had some spirited debates over the years, just as I expect you will around your conference room table.

And make no mistake: He is passionate in his positions. But I've never known anyone who disagrees so agreeably. Now there are just a couple exceptions to these attributes you should know about, however--things that *will* raise his ire: poor performance by the IU football team or by his beloved Cubs, or a knucklehead driver of a car in close proximity. (By the way, Justice Slaughter routinely uses old-timey words like "knucklehead.") If you've not yet talked sports with him or been a passenger in his car, or witnessed him holding forth on something he's passionate about, then you may be wondering how you will even be able to tell when Justice Slaughter is angry or excited, so I'll offer some signs to watch for: a dramatic increase in words uttered per minute, waving arms and hands, and wide eyes. Lawyers who argue before this Court take note. That sort of reaction to your argument may not bode well for you.

Most of us probably have that family member whose spendthrift ways cause friction in the family. That is not Justice Slaughter. He is *frugal*. If you pass his office at 2 o'clock and his lights are out, do not assume he has left early. It probably means he just stepped across the hall for a drink of water. Even a 30-second absence merits his shutting down the power. So you will not need to guard the Court checkbook with Brother Slaughter. What you may want to guard, however, is your *lunch*. He loves and appreciates good food, so if you share a refrigerator, label any especially tasty leftovers clearly.

Let me wrap up my "family" analogy by addressing another topic important to families: in-laws. The person who becomes part of your family by marriage. This

Court is getting—in Julie Slaughter—the *dream* in-law. She is delightful, smart, funny, and kind. I know that any gatherings of your family that she attends will be enlivened by her presence.

When I learned of Geoff's appointment to the Court, I jumped for joy. I do not mean this figuratively. It would have been no big deal had I been at home or even in my office. But it did cause some stares at Men's Warehouse in Castleton, where I'd taken my son to choose his wedding attire. That joy is a personal one, of course, because Geoff is a dear friend. But my elation over his appointment goes way beyond that. As a 30-year member of the Indiana bar, and as a judge frequently called upon to apply Indiana law, I take great pride in the quality and reputation of our Supreme Court.

An appellate judgeship, it seems to me, is a marriage of independent thought, analysis, research, and writing on the one hand, and productive collaboration with similarly prepared colleagues on the other. Justice Slaughter is a *perfect* fit. He is an accomplished thinker and writer. He loves law, he loves policy, he loves language. He loves people. He thrives in civil conversation and exchange with his colleagues and other lawyers. He will be a terrific 109th Justice of the Indiana Supreme Court.