

FROM THE EDITOR

A legal and personal legacy



Amazing, isn't it, how things sometimes come full circle in the oddest ways?

More than 20 years ago, I spent a year covering county government and courts for a newspaper in Tyler, Texas. It was grinding work, filing stories twice a day as I roamed the courthouse a few blocks from the newspaper's offices.

Tyler was an important stop in my life, though, for many reasons. It was 30 miles from Longview, where my grandmother lived, giving me a chance to see her in the last months of her life. And it was a chance to hone my craft in a city removed from my hometown.

The nature of the job meant I was not consumed with public education as I am today. But even then, you couldn't ignore the reverberations from *Plyler v. Doe*, the landmark lawsuit that was filed against the Tyler school district and settled by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1982.

Plyler v. Doe's legacy, which is examined in Sarah Karlin's story on Page 24, is that it grants rights to a free and appropriate public education for the children of illegal immigrants. It was one of two Supreme Court rulings during the 1981-82 term that continues to aid disenfranchised children. (The other case, *Hendrick Hudson v.*

Rowley, was examined in Naomi Dillon's excellent March cover story, "Lost in Translation," available in our archives at www.asbj.com.)

Sarah, a George Washington University student who worked as a summer intern for *ASBJ*, is about the same age I was when I worked in Tyler. Her story, which sheds light on today's policy battles over immigration, is a complex tale—as daunting a task for a young journalist just starting out as it was for me covering a murder trial.

In recent years, I thought of my time in Tyler only intermittently, usually when talking to a friend who lives in the Washington, D.C., area. But during my father's recent battle with leukemia, we talked about visiting my grandmother while I worked there. And editing Sarah's story sent me back there again.

Then, one month to the day after my father died, I received word that my editor at the Tyler newspaper—Nelson Clyde III—had passed away from the same form of leukemia. Both were in their mid-60s; two kind men whose lives touched countless others.

So the circle may be full, but somehow it feels empty inside.

Until next month. ...

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