

The Oregon Court of Appeals building in Salem is just across the street from the Willamette University Campus. But 29 years of memories separate the two for Betsy and me, from that day we left Meagan standing on the curb, both she and we a little uncertain as we drove away from the young lady about to begin her college career, to the day last week when she was sworn in as Oregon's newest appellate court judge.

Most of these weekly *Flynn's Harp* missives, over the six and a half years I have been writing and emailing them to more than 1,400 friends and acquaintances, have been about people and issues I think readers in business, politics and academia, should know about.

But occasionally recollections of the personal have seemed important enough to share, ranging from the day Betsy and I moved from our home of 40 years, taking with us the four decades of memories, to fond recollections of my '55 T-Bird, my mom and my 100-meter medal at the World Senior Games four months after my successful colon-cancer surgery.

And so it is with this personal reflection on the young lady who now wears the judge's robe.

The first-born child inevitably holds a special place in the emotions of parents, even though it always turns out there is enough love to share with subsequent children. And thus it was when Meagan arrived in July of 1967.

In fact Meagan always occupied a special place for not just her parents, but for many who have had occasion to get to know her. That included the fifth-grade teacher in Kalispell, MT, where Betsy and the three kids settled in while I spent six months as editor of a daily newspaper in my home state.

"A teacher spends their life waiting for the perfect student, and she was it," her teacher told me, with fondness and sadness, making me sad as well as I took Meagan to say goodbye to her classmates as we all headed back to Seattle where I was returning to work at UPI.

Meagan always had a competitive bent, which she usually did a good job of hiding, except as a seventh grader in Piedmont, CA, when she found that a male student was challenging her for top student. Her jaw always locked a bit when the male student came up in conversations. The two of them ran for 8th grade class president (except the title was commissioner general) in a hotly contested race that she won, expressing smug pleasure at coming out on top.

She had a goal of being an attorney from early on because her role model was her cousin, Sheila, who was a very successful Seattle attorney.

As she prepared to graduate from Holy Names Academy in Seattle, where she was salutatorian of her class, I urged her to apply to Stanford because her friend, who was valedictorian, was applying there.

"Be cool if you could say you were accepted to Stanford," I told her, even though I knew she had already decided she wanted to attend Willamette.

To both her surprise and mine, she was accepted to Stanford and I feared she would decide she wanted to go there since it would have been a financial challenge for us at that time.

But the ducks on the pond at Willamette, which were the initial attraction the day she first visited the school (although its academic reputation and its law school had roles in the final decision), had already drawn her interest to Willamette.

Good thing, since that's where she met her husband to be, who was also intent on become an attorney, though eventually Gonzaga law school won out for both of them and after graduating they built partner-role practices at separate small firms in Portland. They also provided us two of our granddaughters.

Meagan's practice focus was as a specialist in doing appeals and I once asked her if it was difficult to get the judges to take her case.

"Not really," she replied. "You just have to convince them this case has an issue that they have never decided before," boiling the vital legal appellate role to a simple process.

Once we learned Oregon Gov. John Kitzhauber had appointed her to the court, the potential downside of a daughter who was a judge started to emerge, as when Betsy advised me one day as I was driving up I-5: "You had better not get a ticket! That could be very embarrassing to your daughter!"

So last week she was sworn in as Oregon's newest judge on the court of appeals by the same judge whom she went to work for as a clerk 20 years ago, soon after he had taken his oath as a then-new appeals court judge himself. He brought to her swearing-session last week a picture of that first clerk-judge meeting in 1994.

Now they are both among the 13 judges serving on the Court of Appeals.