



by Steven Levin

Hon. Stephanie Gallagher

U.S. Magistrate Judge, District of Maryland

The walls in the chambers of Magistrate Judge Stephanie A. Gallagher appropriately reflect a career of accomplishments. For a judge who turned 40 this year, the sheer volume of awards is remarkable. There is the plaque from the U.S. Attorney's Office demonstrating its gratitude to then Assistant U.S. Attorney Gallagher for her dedication over a period of seven years. There is the plaque from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, thanking her for the successful prosecution of a public corruption case, the mounted photo of a rocketship seeming to confirm the agency's sincerity. Because of obvious restrictions, ATF could not present alcohol, tobacco, firearms, or explosives, instead providing a clock as a token of its appreciation for various jobs well done. Next to that is a host of other commemoratives and certificates from law enforcement agencies as well as the Federal Bar Association, of which she has been an active board member of the Maryland chapter for the past six years.

But it is perhaps the unexpected mementos that impress Judge Gallagher's visitors the most and speak to a life that is filled with more than a devotion to the law. There is the check for \$1,000,000 from her 2000 stint as a contestant on "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire"¹; the 2009 photo of a local boys' baseball team in Baltimore, ignominiously named the Colts, that she sponsored while in private practice; and the 1999 letter from the Baltimore Orioles, expressing the team's appreciation to then law clerk Gallagher for correcting a grammatical error on the electronic message board at Camden Yards.²

To understand what motivates Judge Gallagher, both as a judge and as an active member of her community, one must first appreciate on whose shoulders she now stands. Born in the peaceful and historically significant



hamlet of Windsor Locks, Conn., home to the country's first woman governor elected in her own right,³ Judge Gallagher joined a family of public servants. Her father, Charles Agli, served as the long-time tax assessor for the City of New Britain. Her mother, Barbara, devoted her teaching energy for many years to first graders in public schools, before and after taking some time off for her own three daughters, of whom Judge Gallagher is the oldest.

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Judge Gallagher's childhood was typical, if typical means to be surrounded by a loving family, supportive teachers, and learning to play an instrument or two. Later, she traded in those instruments for more athletic pursuits, joining both the diving team and tennis team; each sport reflecting both her own sense of independence and her recognition that what each person does impacts another, an appreciation Judge Gallagher would take with her to the bench.

Both before and after her graduation from high school, the Judge entered the work force, working as a bank teller in the summers and as an office manager for a law firm during the school year. These experiences confirmed for her that she was not meant to work at a bank. The law, however, remained an option.

After four years at Georgetown University, Judge Gallagher headed to Harvard Law School. However, she did not entirely leave Georgetown behind. As an undergraduate, never one to be focused too narrowly, Judge Gallagher made time for other pursuits, meeting and later marrying her fellow classmate, Dan Gallagher, who is a commissioner at the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the father of their two children.

Upon graduation from law school, Judge Gallagher found both a job and a home in Baltimore, having been offered the opportunity to clerk for U.S. District Judge J. Frederick Motz. In Judge Motz, she also found inspiration. As Judge Gallagher described during her swearing-in ceremony, "Judge Motz does not teach by lectures or rules or points of law. In fact, the only substantive lecture on a rule every year is about the infield fly rule," which Judge Gallagher acknowledged she still did not fully comprehend. She continued: "Judge Motz teaches his clerks by example, and like all of his clerks, I have learned by watching him take on enormous workloads, far greater than those required of any judge, and handle those workloads with efficiency and attention to detail."

After working in a large D.C. law firm for two years, Judge Gallagher returned to Baltimore, where she served as a federal prosecutor from 2001-2008. After prosecuting one case at a time, she sought to help the community one client at a time. It was then that Judge Gallagher left the

U.S. Attorney's Office with a colleague and started her own litigation boutique firm. A mere three years later, Judge Gallagher got the chance to carry on the traditions of fairness and efficiency passed on to her by Judge Motz, taking the oath of magistrate judge on April 18, 2011.

As the youngest magistrate judge currently serving in the District of Maryland, Judge Gallagher appreciates that others have made possible this opportunity to serve—an opportunity she assures us she will not squander.

As she said during her emotional investiture—after noting that "the best thing about robes is they have pockets for tissues"—she has learned from her mentors through the years "to strive for fairness in every decision" because "every case, no matter how big or small, has an impact on the lives of real people, real entities, and the public interest." ☺

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Endnotes

¹Because then Ms. Gallagher did not make it out of "contestant's row"—not being quick enough to put movies in order by their date of release—the check is non-negotiable.

²Judge Gallagher attended an Orioles game and alertly spotted that the electronic message read as follows: "Please do not trespass nor throw objects onto the field." Judge Gallagher wrote a letter—not disclosing her Court affiliation, to be sure—to the Orioles' organization, identifying the improper double negative.

³Ella T. Grasso, elected in 1974 and sworn in on Jan. 8, 1975, was the first female governor elected without being the wife or widow of a past state governor.