

Public interest law and me, starting out.

I worked for famous civil rights lawyer, Dick Sobol. He did equal employment class action litigation in the federal courts. He'd gotten to know Marian Edelman when he was working for LCDC (Lawyers' Constitutional Defense Committee) in New Orleans, and she was working for it in Jackson, MS. I worked for Dick in NOLA the summer after our 2d yr at YLS. Dick was brilliant but unbalanced. He ended up divorcing his wife and marrying Annie Cotton, who'd been married to Rick. They ended up living in N. California, where he died in 2020. He was charismatic and went for the jugular as a litigator, but his virtues did not extend to mentoring, I found.

I shared an office there one summer with Hillary Rodham, who was working for Marian. At the end of the summer, I was going through New Haven, and she introduced me to her boyfriend Bill Clinton. It was clear he wanted to be President, and she wanted to marry him because of that. He had this way of focusing on you when he was talking to you that was more intense than I've ever experienced. Undoubtedly a key to his success.

In New Orleans, a friend of Dick's, George Cooper, worked with him on Title VII cases and articles. They'd known each other at Columbia LS. He was then a tax professor at CLS. Very nice guy. He ended up divorcing his first wife, and later marrying Judy Blume, a fabulously successful writer of books for adolescent girls, and living with her in Key West where they started a book store, and Martha's Vineyard.

As mentioned, Dick Sobol specialized in Title VII equal employment class actions. He'd brought one against Dan River. Dan River had mills at a number of locations. Its headquarters were in Danville, VA, but it also had mills in Greenville, AL and Greenville, SC. I spend a lot of time in depositions in these places.

Dan River was represented by Homer L. Deakins III, a tall, slender man from the South Carolina Greenville who talked about the camellias in his backyard. He always appeared in these depositions in a three-piece suit with his watch chain over his vest, his hair pomaded, and his nails manicured. As you can imagine, this vision of white supremacy terrified our plaintiffs. I remember him saying to one of them in a deposition in Greenville, AL: "do you mean to say you feel you were discriminated against?" And the man replying "Oh, no suh!"

I'd tell my family about my work at holiday dinners. I have a half-sister who's ten years older than I am, and she was married to Oliver Selfridge, an MIT-trained computer scientist and one of the fathers of AI. He asked me whether Dan River had computerized its payroll records. I found out it had recently. So, Oliver asked me to schedule a deposition for Dan River's head of HR, in Greenville, SC, and to let him come along. This must have been sometime in 1971, before most of us had given

much thought to what computers could do. And I'm sure the HR guy in Greenville, SC had never encountered anyone like Oliver descending on him from Boston.

I still remember those payroll printouts on those rolls of computer paper. As you can imagine, it was easy to show that the pennies' difference in hourly pay between whites and blacks amounted to quite a lot of money, when multiplied out to include the entire Dan River workforce.