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A TRIBUTE TO PETER S. POPOVICH

Erin Leigh Miller†

I was first introduced to Chief Justice Popovich during my interview for a clerkship with the Minnesota Supreme Court. Of course, I wanted to make a good impression and thought I had managed to maintain my dignity throughout the interview until the last question. The Chief asked what extracurricular activities I had been involved in during high school and, blushing, I replied that I had been a pom-pon girl. Fortunately, this response prompted laughter from the Chief and the rest of the Court. Despite—or perhaps because of—this unceremonious beginning, my year with the Chief proved most enriching.

From day one, the Chief treated me with the respect and courtesy of a colleague, a prospect at once welcome and scary to a newly graduated law student. This relationship motivated me to do my homework and pay attention to details because the Chief loved to explore ideas and debate points with the law clerks. Admittedly, it was somewhat disconcerting at first to have my opinion so sincerely asked by the Chief Justice, but I soon relished my role as a sounding board.

The Chief is a wonderful storyteller and some of my fondest memories are of personal anecdotes he shared with me. He would stop by on an occasional afternoon for coffee and a chat, relating stories from his boyhood on the Iron Range and his days serving our legislature. These insights into his warm-hearted and interesting personality are very dear to me.

He expected a lot from those around him, but the Chief also gave a great deal in return. The long hours he willingly spent reading, analyzing, writing, and administering set a marvelous example. It was not uncommon to find him at his desk working, early in the morning and late at night, and he often was loaded down with stacks of briefs for at-home reading. I very much admired the Chief's dedication to improving our judicial system and aspired to the innate sense of fairness he brought to the bench.

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Chief Justice Popovich championed for efficient justice in this state and his efforts at attaining this goal have earned well-deserved accolades. While his past professional achievements are many and widely known, I hardly think that we have seen the last of him yet! I am proud to have worked with the Chief and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.