

A Remarkable Friendship

By Judge Madeleine M. Landrieu

*E*ach of us remembers the big events that have marked our lives. Ask anyone over the age of 50 and they will recall exactly where they were when they learned President Kennedy had been shot and how they were impacted by Dr. Martin Luther King's historic speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Those under 50 will recall with them the thrill of the Berlin Wall coming down and exactly where we were when our nation was attacked on 9/11. And, of course, none of us living here in Louisiana will ever forget the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and our breached levees.

When families gather at holiday time, we may talk about these historic events but mostly we talk about our personal "historic" events, such as births and weddings, illnesses and deaths. The big things. Each of us is marked by these public and personal events. Our lives and our world are changed in small and large ways by them.

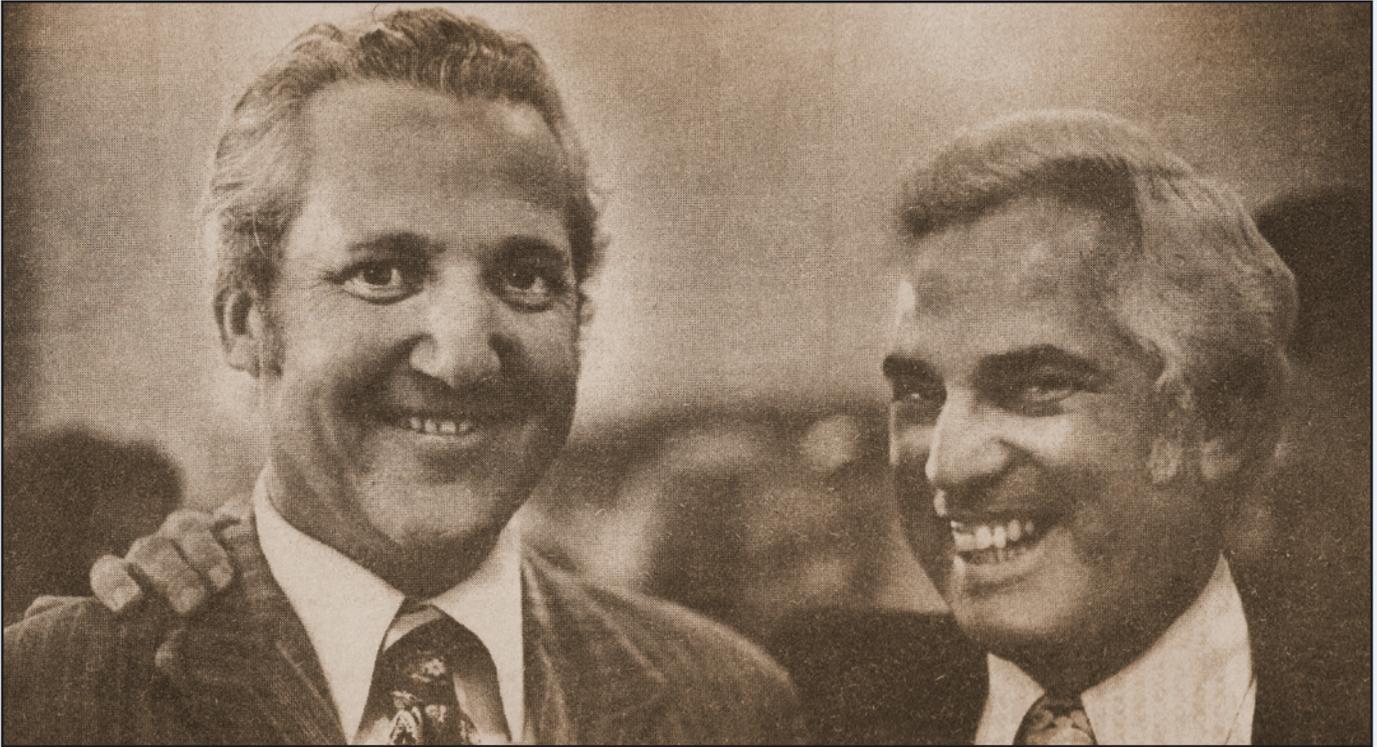
It is harder, but I suggest more compelling, to consider the effects our daily relationships have on us — those relationships that exist as steadily and as surely as the waves of Lake Pontchartrain breaking on the shore. One such relationship I have been privileged to witness is the one between Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Pascal F. Calogero, Jr. and my father, Moon Landrieu.

While I leave to others the task of writing about the Chief's accomplishments and contributions, I write of a remarkable friendship and I write to thank the Chief for being my Dad's best friend — for it is this friendship that has indelibly marked both

of them and, in turn, me. These two private and fairly introverted men have, by the circumstances of their friendship, lived public lives that have contributed in no small way to a fairer and more just community for us all.

To hear him tell it, the Chief, known to me my whole life as "Uncle Nunny," was the unlikeliest of all law students. He grew up in New Orleans' Eighth Ward and attended school in a segregated New Orleans. His mother, Louise Moore Calogero, was the daughter of Irish and German immigrants. His father was a strong, and strong-willed, New Orleans police officer with a limited formal education who instilled in the Chief a desire to excel and to serve. He was a strict disciplinarian who was committed to seeing that his son complete high school.

Family was always important to the Chief. He grew up with two brothers, Jack and Bobby, and his sister, Grace. His siblings were some of his biggest supporters during his political campaigns,



A lasting friendship: Moon Landrieu and Pascal F. Calogero, Jr. *Reproduced with permission of the Calogero family.*

and his sister-in-law Iris spent 31 years as his loyal and dedicated secretary.

In his early years at Colton Grammar School and later at St. Aloysius, the Chief was inspired by teachers like Aleda Perez and Brother Martin Hernandez. Blessed with a keen mind, the Chief graduated from high school with an academic scholarship to Loyola University. It was there that he renewed his acquaintance with my Dad, then Maurice Landrieu, who was attending Loyola on a baseball scholarship. The two had previously met on the baseball diamond, where they both dreamed of one day playing in the majors. They met first as competitors and then as teammates on the All-Star team that went to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in 1949. Meeting up again at Loyola, the two became fast friends.

At Loyola, both the Chief and my Dad were deeply influenced by the social justice teachings of Fr. Joseph Fichter, S.J., and Fr. Louis Twomey, S.J. These teachings challenged their perspectives and, in turn, affected the lives of those they touched in their respective careers. When a young Pascal would recount Fr. Twomey's teachings at home to his father, his father threatened to pull him

out of school. Such talk of social justice concepts in a segregated New Orleans in the 1950s was to his father, and to many others, nonsense. But Pascal persisted and his father ultimately relented.

In 1951, at his father's insistence, the Chief entered Loyola University Law School. One semester later, my Dad joined him there. In the fall of the following year, Loyola Law School admitted its first two African-American students: Norman Francis and Ben Johnson. Fr. Twomey's social justice teachings were no longer theoretical. They were real and tangible.

My Dad recently spoke publicly about how seamlessly these two young African-American men integrated the law school. "They came every day dressed in coats and ties; they were clearly gentlemen. They were clearly as smart as the rest of us or as slow as the rest of us, whatever we were." This may seem an odd comment to make of fellow students, but one must recall that neither the Chief nor my dad, then 22 or so years old, had ever been in a classroom or in a social setting with an African-American.

Despite how well they fit in, Norman and Ben were not allowed to join the law

fraternity. But the Chief, then president of the Thomas More Law Club, invited them both to join that club and they did so, without incident or fanfare. The club's only real event was an off-campus social. The students then realized the impact of their friendships. They were unable to find a place to have the social because they could not find an establishment that would serve a racially "mixed" crowd. They ended up having a crawfish boil at my Dad's parents' home—no doubt one of the first integrated parties in the city. Many in attendance there and in law school at the time became giants in the legal community from my perspective: Sam Dalton, Joe Berrigan, Charlie Kronlage, John Lambert, Blake Arata, Jerry Fedoroff and Bill Redman, to name just a few.

As Dad, Norman and Pas graduated from Loyola Law School, they each married and began their careers. Norman's took him to academia where he is now celebrating his 40th year as president of Xavier University. Dad and Pas started a law firm together after each served for several years in the JAG Corps—their law firm forming as a result of a conversation at the concession stand in Civil District



Pascal F. Calogero, Jr., left, with his two former law partners, Moon Landrieu and Charles A. Kronlage, Jr. *Reproduced with permission of the Calogero family.*

Court. At the time, the Chief was one of two law clerks to the judges of Civil District Court, and Dad had hung up his shingle. While they were talking, Charlie Kronlage, a Loyola classmate, happened upon them and “wanted in.” The three opened the law firm of Landrieu, Calogero and Kronlage above the Broadmoor Kiddie Shop near the intersection of Broad and Washington in 1957. My grandmother worked (I am pretty sure for free!) as their secretary. They each speak of those days at the firm fondly and the Chief recalls that they never once argued over law fees, nor have they ever had an argument in their half-decade of friendship.

In the ensuing years, Dad and Pascal each had a boatload of kids. Dad has nine and Pas has 10 — Debbie Calogero Applebaum, David, Pascal III, Elizabeth, Thomas, Michael, Stephen, Gerald, Katie and Chrissy. David, Thomas, Michael and Gerald followed their Dad’s footsteps and are attorneys. Michael and I had the privilege of working together for a while when he joined the Gainsburgh, Benjamin law firm while I was a partner there. Katie is in law school now, and Chrissy may attend law school after completing her undergraduate education.

With this crew came a lifetime of birthdays, graduations and weddings, joys and

hardships, hand-wringing, praying and thanksgiving for all they have shared.

In 1969, Dad left the law firm when he was elected mayor of New Orleans. He had run on a promise to address the issue of race relations and was committed to appointing African-Americans to key positions in city government. He knew, however, that the journey toward equality would be long and he understood the role the courts would play in this process. Admiring Pas’ intellect (he had finished first in their law school class) and knowing Pas’ commitment to social justice, Dad encouraged him to run for one of the two open seats on the Louisiana Supreme Court. Pas was elected to that court in 1972. He was subsequently re-elected three times — in 1974, 1988 and 1998. Upon his retirement this year, he will have served for 36 years on the state’s highest court, making him the longest serving justice in the history of the state of Louisiana.

Along their journey, the Chief and Dad have been inspired by the friendships of others. Lolis Elie is one such friend — a brilliant lawyer and civil rights leader whom Pas recalls meeting for the first time during one of Dad’s earliest campaigns. It has been my great privilege to be present for conversations and laughs between and among these men. They argue, wrestle with issues, and confound you and each other with legal talk and laughter, all in the way friends do. All quite ordinary, actually.

For as many years as I can remember, during Mardi Gras week, you can see the Chief and Dad sitting in lawn chairs in a concrete parking lot, facilitating the parking of cars in a lot that can fit only half of those who want to park there. Once a year, they make a duck hunt with their sons to a place where there are rarely any ducks. To hear the boys tell it, the duck blinds are so close to the camp that you can hear Dad and Pas on the porch chewing on the most recent current event or social issue of the day. And, on almost any given Friday for the past 50 years, you can come upon Dad and Pas having lunch with law school classmates and a random assortment of others who have joined them along the way. This is the stuff of ordinary friendships.

But, I cannot help but think that theirs is an extraordinary friendship. Born of a shared commitment to the principles of



Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Pascal F. Calogero, Jr. with attorney Lolis Edward Elie and Moon Landrieu. Reproduced with permission of the Calogero family.

social justice, their friendship has shaped their world view, guided their work, and touched the lives of an untold number of people.

When Pascal became Chief Justice in 1990, Dad was given the privilege of presenting his best friend to the Court:

It has been said that no man is a hero to his valet. Not so in the case of Pas. The closer you get to him—the more you see of him—the more you are compelled to love him. He has been my best friend for 40 years.

In the small things — those things that count little or not at all — he can be harmlessly neglectful, confusing, forgetful and amusing. If you ride with him behind the wheel of a car or hunt with him at John Olivier's camp as he falls out of a pirogue or out of a duck blind with shotgun in hand, you will remember prayers you have not uttered since your First Communion or Bar Mitzvah. . . .

But, in the large things—the important things that count much—he is a

remarkable human being. He is compassionate and kind, fair and honest, intelligent and industrious, open and inquiring, patient and understanding, thoughtful and wise. He is slow to anger and quick to forget, bears no malice and harbors no grudge. A friend to many, an enemy to none, he tolerates no prejudice in himself and treats all with equal justice. He is, in many ways, the embodiment of the best that is in all of us and a reflection of the high ideals of the people of this state. . . . In the final analysis, it is the character of his soul that gives value and meaning to his many natural gifts. . . .

On Nov. 4, 2008, our country elected its first African-American president. My family gathered for the election returns as we always do. Among those with us were the Chief, Dr. Norman Francis and his wife Blanche and Lolis Elie. It was a poignant moment for me to watch Dad, Norman, the Chief and Lolis as the stations declared that Sen. Barack Obama would be the next president of the United States of America. As America watched the news coverage

of the senator's speech and the crowd gathered in Grant Park, as we watched the celebrations in Indonesia and the gathering in Times Square in New York, I watched these friends take it all in. And I could not help but think — what an extraordinary friendship theirs has been.

One of the finest gifts the Chief ever gave to my father was his friendship. While we as Louisiana citizens are thankful for the many contributions that Chief Justice Calogero has made to our system of justice, I am most thankful for the remarkable friendship the Chief has shared with my Dad.

Judge Madeleine M. Landrieu is a 1987 graduate of Loyola University Law School where she was a member of the Law Review, Moot Court Board and the Law Clinic. Upon graduation, she entered the private practice of law. In 2001, she was elected to serve as a judge for Orleans Parish Civil District Court. She currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Louisiana District Judges Association and as chair of that organization's Disaster Recovery and New Judge Training Committees. (421 Loyola Ave., Rm. 314, New Orleans, LA 70112)

