

Remarks of United States Senior Circuit Judge
Frank M. Coffin at the induction
of Morton A. Brody as United States
District Judge for the District of Maine
Bangor, Maine, October 7, 1991

I claim a special pleasure in sharing in these proceedings. First, Judge Brody comes from my own home community, the Twin Cities, although we grew up on opposite sides of the Androscoggin. Judge Brody, working in his father's Cancellation Shoe Store on what is appropriately named Court Street in Auburn, listened to lively discussion of the issues of the day between his Dad, customers, and the cop on the beat. One might even say that a shoe store is a good place to find one's tongue, as well as one's sole. Find his tongue he did, for he soon became a fixture at radio station WLAM as an announcer. His college yearbook accuses him of signing off by saying, "Recordially yours."

My second bond with Judge Brody occurred when he crossed the Androscoggin and entered my own Alma Mater, Bates College. There he became a fellow disciple, along with Chief Justice McKusick and myself of an unforgettable, acerbic, demanding, and supportive debate coach, Brooks Quimby. Our future justice and judge won debates at such places as MIT and the Eastern Forensic Tournament at Fordham. His college yearbook for the class of 1955 contains a revealing picture of a young, almost objectionably handsome Mort Brody, standing at a lectern in a debate with Oxford University, leaning forward intently, wagging a disproportionately long index finger. Behind him sits the president of the college, Dr. Charles Phillips, smiling enigmatically as if to say, "What hath Brooks Quimby wrought?"

Well, you have heard of all the distinguished milestones in Judge Brody's career. That career is unusual enough, but something even more unusual has piqued my interest. On Thursday, June 13, then Justice Brody received a telephone call from the President. With characteristic understatement, Justice Brody observed, "It's kind of a unique experience to pick up the phone and talk to the President." I should say so. I have inquired whether a tape recording was made of that conversation. Apparently not. But I think I can reconstruct it from an empathetic imagination.

President - Mort? This is George.

M.B. - Hi George, how's the Senate doing?

President - No, Mort. This is not George Mitchell. I'm George Bush.

M.B. (who stands up for the rest of the call) - Oh. . .What can I do for you, Mr. President?

President - I'd like to appoint you to the federal district court in Maine. Bill Cohen has been on my back - I mean Bill Cohen has been singing your praises.

M.B. - Gee, Mr. President, I can't do that. I'm very happy right where I am.

President - Mort, you don't understand. It's not a favor I'm doing you. That court needs help. You know who's there now. Gene Carter and Brock Hornby. Need I say more?

M.B. - I understand what you're saying, Mr. President. But, after all, they don't have the last word. There's the court of appeals to keep them in line.

President - That court? Mort, you've got to be kidding.

M.B. - OK Mr. President. I'm willing to make the sacrifice.

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Now - lest someone take me seriously. . .and someone occasionally does - let me say that

Judge Brody joins a court already at the forefront of the nation's 94 federal district courts. The inheritors of a lofty tradition, ennobled most recently by Judge Gignoux, Chief Judge Carter and Judge Hornby are two of our system's most competent district judges. Now joined by Judge Brody, they make a formidable troika. Senator Cohen, we are deeply indebted to you.