Sandy Margulies: I'm Sandy Margulies Justice with the First District Court of Appeal and I'm here today to conduct a legacy interview of Justice Ignacio also known as Nace Ruvolo who recently retired from the Court of Appeal. So, I'd like to start out and just briefly ask you some information about your background and family. So, why don't we start out with something easy. Where were you born?

Ignazio Ruvolo: All right. I was born in a town called Elizabeth, New Jersey. It was in Union County. It's about 25 to 30 miles outside of New York City.

Sandy Margulies: And why don't you tell us a little bit about your parents?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay. I came from a very blue-collar family. My father worked in an umbrella factory. He started as a Stock Person and he moved up to be the Foreman for the production of this factory before he retired. My mother raised four children, including myself and during that time, she would do piece work that my father would bring her home in her spare time. She would sew the tips on umbrellas back in those days. It wasn't quite as automated as it is today, and she would get paid per umbrella for doing that. After we were old enough to take care of ourselves, she went and became a bookkeeper for A&P, which was a supermarket that's on --.

Sandy Margulies: Right. I remember A&P.

Ignazio Ruvolo: On the East Coast. And she did very well. My mother was the salutatorian of her high school class, but didn't go to college. Came from a poor family, my grandparents all emigrated here from Italy.

Sandy Margulies: Which part of Italy?

Ignazio Ruvolo: My father's family came from Sicily Ribera and my mother's family came from Calabria, and they met here and my mother grew up in Pennsylvania and my father met her around the time of the second world war. And that was that. I have --.

Sandy Margulies: Now, do you know how they met?

Ignazio Ruvolo: You know, I don't remember how they met. Oh, yes, I do. I do. My mother's sister worked at the Umbrella Factory and mentioned my mother to my father one day and said, "Hey, I'd like to fix you up with my sister" and that's how. Because she was coming down to visit from Pennsylvania and that's how they arranged it.

Sandy Margulies: So, you had three siblings.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I do.

Sandy Margulies: And their names?

Ignazio Ruvolo: It's Paula, Angela and Peter. Now we're all named for our grandparents. I was the first born of the first born so I got grandfather Ignacio's name,

but Peter is my mother's father's name and Paula who's the eldest was my father's mother's name and Angela was my mother's mother's name.

Sandy Margulies: So, where are your siblings located?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay. My sister Paula is now living in Fort Myers, Florida and she now occupies her time in putting on directing plays, community plays. She was an actress and a singer for a number of years after she retired, early retirement but now she's in production only. My sister Angela lives in Toms River, New Jersey which is a Beach Community in the New Jersey Shore and she's retired and living in a little over 55 community. My brother who was a high school teacher his whole career lives up in Pennsylvania, in Eastern Pennsylvania near Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Sandy Margulies: Now, your sister who lives on the Jersey Shore's, did she work outside the home?

Ignazio Ruvolo: For a time, she did. She worked in a bank. She was a Bank Teller for a while, and Paula, I don't think did, one in Florida. I don't think she worked. Oh, yes, of course she did. She worked for a while for a probate firm as a paralegal.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, interesting.

Ignazio Ruvolo: For a number of years, that's right.

Sandy Margulies: Now, your brother --

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yes.

Sandy Margulies: -- who lives in Pennsylvania –

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right.

Sandy Margulies: What subject did he teach?

Ignazio Ruvolo: English. High School English.

Sandy Margulies: High School English.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah.

Sandy Margulies: And did he ever describe his experiences to you?

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Ignazio Ruvolo: A little bit. Not too often. I mean he would you know talk sometimes about the books he was making or asking the children to read, but no, he didn't have a lot of tales out of school so to speak.

Sandy Margulies: Now, you have some children?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I do. Only two.

Sandy Margulies: -- and they are?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Michael and Sarah.

Sandy Margulies: And how old are Michael and Sarah?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Michael is 42 and Sarah's 41, and Michael lives in San Diego near right on the Los Gatos border. He's a biologist. Both of my children were biologists -- are biologists.

Sandy Margulies: Which is really interesting that they're oriented towards the Sciences.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right, exactly.

Sandy Margulies: Were you a science major in college?

Ignazio Ruvolo: No, not at all. I say science and math were my worst subjects.

Sandy Margulies: Yes, I understand actually.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right. But my children did well and they were not interested in law or history. I was a history major. None of that, but he's in a biotech firm and Sarah lives up in Concord, California and she's a middle school teacher.

Sandy Margulies: Now, do you have any grandchildren?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I do.

Sandy Margulies: How old?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Ryan is the eldest, he's 14. He's also engineering science first --.

Sandy Margulies: Oriented.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right. And then I've got Lauren who is nine and I have Caitlin who is -- Caitlin is the same age as Lauren. So, she's nine also and then her brother Sean is seven maybe.

Sandy Margulies: (00:06:51) there.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, yeah.

Sandy Margulies: (00:06:53) grandchildren.

Ignazio Ruvolo: What we have -- you know, we have a few from Barbara to.

Sandy Margulies: Right. Well, I'm going to get to Barbara so that's a good segue. So, you are married to the fabulous Barbara or Barb --

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yup, I am.

Sandy Margulies: -- who I like a lot as you know --

Ignazio Ruvolo: I do.

Sandy Margulies: -- and I believe you two met at Rossmoor.

Ignazio Ruvolo: We did. Barbara was the president of a club there called the Published Writers of Rossmoor and I was a member because I was in the process of publishing a novel, piece of fiction that I wrote which lawyers have been set up in writing fiction 25 years around the bench. But anyway, we met there at the club meetings. Started dating.

Sandy Margulies: So, how long did you go out for before you got married?

Ignazio Ruvolo: We were together for a year -- almost a year and a half before our wedding.

Sandy Margulies: And if I'm not mistaken, Barb has gotten you into singing?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yes. We had rehearsed a lot. Yesterday afternoon as a matter of fact. This community that where we live is 55 and older. They're more than 200 clubs and then Published Writers is one of them and another club that I joined is called the Ashmolean Singers and we put on three concerts a year. Actually, there are two performances of each concert. So, there are six performances each year and our (00:08:26) concerts are coming up later this month. The Golden Age of Television. It's all theme songs and Ads.

Sandy Margulies: From TV shows? Oh, that'll be fun.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah.

Sandy Margulies: Can you give me some idea of some of the TV shows.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Well, Gilligan's Island, Bonanza, American Bandstand. I'm going to do a solo on the Petticoat Junction theme.

Sandy Margulies: Well, I'm dating myself but I'm quite familiar with all of those shows that you just mentioned, and I think you've take your golfing, is that right?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I do some golfing, I do. I'm not terribly good at it, but I don't -- that's because I don't have a steady program. I'm episodic golfer.

Sandy Margulies: And where do you normally golf?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right there Rossmoor where I live?

Sandy Margulies: Well, they have a golf course.

Ignazio Ruvolo: They have two. They have an 18 hole and a 9 hole.

Sandy Margulies: Well, that's nice.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah.

Sandy Margulies: Do you have a handicap?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, but not going to put it on camera. It's to hide it.

Sandy Margulies: So, I want to go a little bit back track talk about your educational background.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay.

Sandy Margulies: So, I assume you went to high school in New Jersey?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I did. I went to Rahway High School. That's the town. I was born in Elizabeth and then when I was five years old. We moved to a house in Rahway, which was about six or seven miles from Elizabeth. Still in Union County.

Sandy Margulies: Now, how big was the high school?

Ignazio Ruvolo: We had about I think it's probably 700 students.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, so not that big.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, no, I wasn't that. It wasn't huge but yeah that's 700.

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Sandy Margulies: And, did you focus on any activities in High School?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I did. I was – I was on the football team for a couple of years and then I didn't want to do that anymore. So, then I moved over to track and field. And I – I worked in the – I did that sport. And then, I was the student council president in my senior year. And I join the club called the Key Club. I don't know –

Sandy Margulies: Oh yeah. I'm familiar with Key Club.

Ignazio Ruvolo: You know. You've heard of that?

Sandy Margulies: Oh, yeah.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah. I was a Key Club member.

Sandy Margulies: Yeah. That's lot of volunteer work if I remember it correctly.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, exactly.

Sandy Margulies: And what were your events in track and field?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I was a shot putter.

Sandy Margulies: You were shot putter?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah. I was, I was bigger then. Big for my age, let's put it that way.

Sandy Margulies: And after High School you went to Wreckers

Ignazio Ruvolo: I did.

Sandy Margulies: Did you select Wreckers, because it was in New Jersey or --

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah. Partially that it was, again my family didn't have a lot of money. And Wreckers had in-state tuition. So, it was a good place to go if you didn't have a lot of money. It was nearby, it was only about 30 miles, 35 miles from Rahway, so I could come back and see my family whenever I wanted too. But it was far enough away. So, that I live on campus.

Sandy Margulies: So, you did live on campus?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I did.

Sandy Margulies: In the dorms.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I did. Yeah.

Sandy Margulies: What was your major?

Ignazio Ruvolo: History.

Sandy Margulies: Any particular area of history?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I like – I had about four classes dealing with English history. I like, you know, our law evolved from English as you know. From the English model. And that was – there were a lot of cultural things that we got from the UK. So, I kind of-- For me it was like pre-American history, history. So, I just enjoyed it.

Sandy Margulies: Now, did you go immediately from undergrad to Law School?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I did. Yes, I was – I left New Jersey two weeks after my graduation in – from Wreckers. It was a time back in the late 60s. The Mamas & the Papas and the Beach Boys were kind of, you know in control of youth culture. And I heard this siren called to come to California.

Sandy Margulies; Well, that was my next question. Why California?

Ignazio Ruvolo: All the – why not? It' s the golden state beaches. Warm weather, palm trees, and that was one of the reasons I went to law school in Southern California. Because I didn't know that much about the – about north, Northern California. And I was in the fraternity and a couple of my fraternity brothers were out here in Summer 68'. And that changed them. And they came back and I said "you know what? I don't want to undergo a changed like that", you know right now I want to move on

with my education and so on. So, I decided that I would –would focus on schools in Southern California. And I do want to go to LA either because I do it's just going to be -- a mass place. That's why I chose geographically that my first decision was I wanted to go to San Diego and then I look at the schools and there were no a lot of choices. So, back at that time. So, I went – there was not even a school in Irvine back then.

Sandy Margulies: I'm just going to back track just a little bit.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Sure.

Sandy Margulies: I heard you say you were in a fraternity; which fraternity were you in?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Alpha Chi Rho.

Sandy Margulies: Alpha Chi Rho?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Alpha Chi Rho it was -- it's a small – it was a small national fraternity. They only had about maybe 30 chapters. And they only had one out here. And they had a chapter at Cal. I had nobody out here. So, what I did was, I came I drove out I arranged to stay there for the summer.

Sandy Margulies: At Cal?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah. At the fraternity chapter at Cal. So, I came out here and I arrived here like a week or two after the people's park demonstrations.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, timing is everything.

Ignazio Ruvolo: It's a pretty crazy time to be in Berkley. But I stayed there and I worked at Del Monte Cannery was then in Oakland.

Sandy Margulies: Yes.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I was on the night shift. And I would come back to the – to the fraternity house to go to bed. And I get in the bed and I could hear the Camp O'Neal. I still remember to this day hearing "hey Jude" in the Camp O'Neal at 07:00 a.m. as I was crawling into bed. But I enjoyed – I enjoyed a lot.

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When I went then to at the end of the summer, down to San Diego to start –

Sandy Margulies: So, you went to the University San Diego Law School?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Correct.

Sandy Margulies: Okay. When you went down at the end of the summer?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I went down at the end of the summer and it was – I loved it. It was everything that I had envisioned except that I realized that I liked to better up here, because – I don't know – I made the wrong geographic decision. How wrong can San Diego be back in the late 60s or early 70s.

Sandy Margulies: Beautiful place.

Ignazio Ruvolo: It was wonderful – I mean the beaches were great and there was – my tennis game improved immensely from the time I was there. And that's where I started playing golf too. A lot of beach time. But I liked the culture up here.

Sandy Margulies: It's different.

Ignazio Ruvolo: It was more refined.

Sandy Margulies: It's a different vibe.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Pardon.

Sandy Margulies: Different vibe.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Definitely deferent vibe. More theater, more – the music scene concerts. Non-Rock in Roll stuff was – was here. It was just – the food was better; the restaurants were better. The buildings were older. San Diego at that time was very much in transition. It was – there are lot of retired people and Navy back then, Military, Marines as well. But and schools. But not a lot of industry, not a lot of businesses and it was in the time was there businesses started – moving into San Diego area and there was a building boom that began and has continued even up to today. I go down there. I was there on the San Diego few months ago and it's almost unrecognizable from when I was there in the early 70s.

Sandy Margulies; Do you remember that the Coronado Island, the only thing there was the Coronado Hotel.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I know.

Sandy Margulies: And know it's all different.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I know. Well, I haven't been on Coronado Island. I worked one summer as a Beach Attendant for the Coronado Beach, and we would go to the hotel once in a while, in the Chart House which was there.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, yes, I love the Chart House. So, how would you describe your experience at Law School?

Ignazio Ruvolo: It – I changed a lot. I was kind of a cut up in College. An extrovert and I wasn't totally into the social thing when I wasn't doing my work. But when got to law school, I really got into the law. I loved the logic of it. That's why I went – I thought I would really enjoy the thought process of law. And I did. And, I buckled down and studied my first year quite

a bit and did very well. In part I was just attracted to – to the thought process and learning the principles of law and solving legal problems.

Sandy Margulies: Well, you were on law review, right?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I was. Yeah. I was on law review my second year. Excuse me. And then I was the editor in chief, my third year for law review.

Sandy Margulies: And I didn't ask you a real basic question. What lead you to go to law school?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Well, I alluded to the thought process that I – I knew what existed in the law. Of course logic applies to a lot of different discipline, but I was no good in Science. So—

Sandy Margulies: As I said I understand that.

Ignazio Ruvolo: So, right. So, logic and Science was, you know, no-go for me. So, I thought law would be a good – a good substitute. And it's also – it's also state in history.

Sandy Margulies: True.

Ignazio Ruvolo: So, that was consistent with my background as well.

Sandy Margulies: Now, you have an advanced law degree from the University of Virginia.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I do. I went there, after I was on this court. When I was in division two. Back in those days, the UVA law school had a program, every few years that they would where they would have justices from around the country. Come there and take – and take courses for two summers. The entire summer. And then take your exams of the past fail. And So –

Sandy Margulies: Thank goodness.

Ignazio Ruvolo: And write a – and write a thesis. And, and there were people from everywhere. We had – actually my class we had I can tell you what we had. We had Janice Brown was there from the supreme court.

Sandy Margulies: Of California.

Ignazio Ruvolo: From California. These are all justices and Ileana More and Aronson, Rich Aronson and Patti Kitching was in my class and Connie Callahan.

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Sandy Margulies: Well, that was pretty sizeable group from California.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, we had five or six. Six people I think including myself, but the class size was about 35. But we had the biggest group, state wide there and it was great. We had great teachers, Pam Karlan came out from Stanford and taught a common law class. We had great teachers.

Sandy Margulies: What was your thesis about?

Ignazio Ruvolo: My thesis? Funny you should ask that?

Sandy Margulies: You brought it. There it is on camera.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, it's not for sale.

Sandy Margulies: In the San Diego --

Ignazio Ruvolo: In San Diego -- after I wrote my thesis, I decided that I would submit it to my alma matter for publication and they took -- the thesis is appellate mediation settling the last frontier of ADR. Back on those days, I was the head of our mediation program here at the first district and so I had a lot of data back when we started the program. It was Bob Dousy and Barbara Jones and I were on the original committee and we went around and studied programs in Oregon and the ninth circuit and few other Hawaii had a – we didn't go to Hawaii to see how the ran their programs and then we came up with the model that would work for us. And so, this article talks about those years, the formative years and what other programs we looked at, what elements of the programs we adapted for ourselves and then it also talks about the first three or four years of production that we had in mediation and our results and what kind of cases did well. Excuse me a second. So, I published that one back. That was my thesis.

Sandy Margulies: So, while you were in law school?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yes.

Sandy Margulies: Did you have any thoughts about eventually joining the judiciary? Was that in your radar?

Ignazio Ruvolo: No, no. The only thing I knew in law school was that I wanted to do litigation. And I wanted to do civil litigation. That as far as I got with my thought process.

Sandy Margulies: So, what brought you to the conclusion that you wanted to do civil litigation?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I just enjoyed the civil problems. I thought that although some criminal problems can be complex and weighty that as a whole I thought that the civil jurisprudence was a little bit more complicated and took more thought way through it and I like that, I loved writing already, I mean, I published a couple articles in the law review. So, I just decided civil was the way to go and that's how I transitioned on my first job.

Sandy Margulies: So, you took the bar exam in California?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I took the bar exam -- what happened was after my first year, and I did very well in law school and I wanted to transfer up here to Bolt. And I asked the dean about it and the dean said that we usually have some

students transfer almost every class, but that year which was -- that would have been 1970, they were holding places for students that have been drafted out of law school. So, they had us hold in the 80s, I mean, in the 60s. So, they had to hold those places available for the people who are being discharged back out so that they can re-enter law school. So, that year, Bolt didn't take any transfers from outside of the group. So, I didn't get to transfer which was okay, I mean, I loved San Diego.

Sandy Margulies: So, you took the bar?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I took the bar before I left. The editor in chief before me is Pete Bowie. It was Pete Bowie. Pete just retired. He's a chief bankruptcy judge down in San Diego, but Pete was at justice, in main justice in Washington.

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And he was in the civil division in the tort section. And he said, "Naz, you'll love it. Come out here, you're going to get more responsibility than any new graduate can get on this job. You're going to be trying cases, we have a really smart bunch of people here working and you'll love it." So, I applied for the honor's program which meant that I could enter the justice department, the federal government at the higher GS level than if I just had my law degree. And I applied, and gosh, I made $11,000 that first year. I mean, it was spectacular.

Sandy Margulies: It's interesting because when I first started out in the Alameda County DA's office, I started at $16,000 and I thought that was terrific.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right.

Sandy Margulies: And it's all changed now.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah. It was reasonably competitive for a couple of years back in those days. So, they were able to get some good people. But I went back --

Sandy Margulies: So, you went to justice?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I went to justice, main justice --

Sandy Margulies: Justice department.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah. I got back there and went in our little library area and everybody sitting around watching T.V. I said, "what are you doing watching T.V.?" "It was the Watergate hearings." Something it's hard to avoid.

Sandy Margulies: So, it was really exciting time to be back.

Ignazio Ruvolo: It was a very exciting time to be back there and then after my first year that I worked there -- I was there for four and a half years. I think it was after my first year. It could have been my second year. My boss called me in, and he says, "James St. Clair is looking for some really high achieving young lawyers to come on over to the president's legal

staff to help with this Watergate business. Would you like to go for an interview?" And I said, "no way. I know what's going to happen." They're going to lock up the young lawyers in the law libraries and we're going to be researching executive privilege and all these other constitutional questions that St. Clair had to deal with as the president's lawyer as supposed to going around the country and trying cases everywhere. So, that was not a good career move for me.

Sandy Margulies: That was a smart move.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I know.

Sandy Margulies: Very smart. So, what kinds of cases did you handle?

Ignazio Ruvolo: They were all tort cases. They were all cases where the government was sued for negligence. Like California, we had the Federal Tort Claims Act which governs what kinds of cases and liability the government had and what defenses they had. As a matter of fact, the California Tort Liability Act is modelled after the federal system. So, that's what I did and I had all kinds of cases. I had everything from slip and fall in front of a little tiny post office in Albany, Georgia that I tried up to mine disasters in Kentucky and the Sunshine silver mine disaster, I was the lead counsel for that. At the time, it was the largest non-coal mine disaster in American history. It was in Idaho. Kellogg, Idaho is the mine.

Sandy Margulies: So, you were travelling to different places and staying there for periods of times?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Correct. For depositions and witness meetings and document productions and so on.

Sandy Margulies: So, when you were doing litigation in the U.S. Justice Department, was the extent of the discovery as involved as it is now as extensive?

Ignazio Ruvolo: We had to produce a lot of documents and witnesses. I want to say that the hostility, the combativeness of civil litigation when I came to private, it wasn't like that. The lawyers got along much better particularly on the big cases that I handled because we were together a lot. So, we had a lot of mutual respect for each other and even in the small cases, we just got done what we needed to get done.

Sandy Margulies: In justice.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Correct. For example, I tried the case in Oklahoma City where the El Reno Reformatory, they had a riot and the corrections people put everybody on lockdown for a couple of days and they thought that everybody was calmly went out and they talk to the various groups and they thought everything was calm and so they went back to general population, you can only keep people segregated for so long because of the problems that creates.

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So, they said, "okay, we're going to have get back to general population" and couple of hours after they started that, the victim was walking to the laundry room with his laundry and another prisoner came up to him and stabbed him. So, his wife sued for wrongful death and I tried that case in Oklahoma City. That's the kind of cases we had.

Sandra Margulies: So, at some point, you decided to leave the justice department in DC and enter private practice?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Correct, back to the Bay Area.

Sandra Margulies: Back to the Bay Area. You got yourself back to the Bay Area.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I did, that was in 77, I left justice, even then the San Diego area industry and commerce was still developing and so the law practice was much more provincial. Civil law practice down there was much more provincial than it was up here. So, to me it -- not only was it going to get good bigger cases, more mature business and industry up here but also, I got back to the Bay Area that I loved.

Sandra Margulies: So, you joined the firm of?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Bronson, Bronson & McKinnon, which was then one of the biggest firms in San Francisco, civil firms. They were looking for someone to come in with my experience because they had a couple senior partners who needed somebody basically, they were the generals and I was the lieutenant and I would go out and do the discovery and the prep work and work up.

Sandra Margulies: Now, I should ask you. What drew you away from the justice department to private practice?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay. I wanted to come back to the West. I didn't want to -- I mean, first of all, I was married and I was on the road 90 days a year.

Sandra Margulies: That's why.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah. So, I couldn't stay at the tort section forever. So, there was time again I was told that between three and five years was the right amount of time to develop the experience that had the most market ability if you're going to go back into the private sector. So, I did that and so I decided I was going to come back here. I was already a member of the bar and wanted to join a civil firm. Keep doing similar work, not necessarily the same because you wouldn't be representing the government very much and so I came out here and I interviewed and took the job at once.

Sandra Margulies: So, that segues into my next question. What areas of law did you specialize in when you were in private practice?

Ignazio Ruvolo: All right. I was in private practice at Bronson for 17 years from the time I came back in 77 until 94 January when I was put on the superior court

and during that time, I handled -- I was lucky, it was a time when lawyers were starting to specialize but fortunately, I worked for a number of different partners who had different practices. So, I got experience in many areas, franchise litigation, construction litigation, I did a lot of construction litigation, did some tort work. Some tort defense work but I also did some plaintiff's work, commercial, I did some a couple intellectual property cases, you name it, it all kind of legal malpractice defense. I did a lot of legal malpractice defense because I was very involved in legal ethics activities.

Sandra Margulies: How big was the firm?

Ignazio Ruvolo: The firm back then was about 140 which by today's standards is not big but it was among the top, 10 or 12 in size in the Bay Area then.

Sandra Margulies: So, when did you become a partner?

Ignazio Ruvolo: In 1983, it was an eight-year line to get to be a partner from beginning to your first eligibility for partnership, but I got a couple of years credit they gave me for the time I was a justice, so it shortened it but it was still five years.

Sandra Margulies: So, while you were out in private practice, did you get involved in other activities or committees or bar associations?

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Ignazio Ruvolo: I did. I was very active in the local and state bar. Probably my focus was on legal ethics and I joined the San Francisco Legal Ethics Committee in 79, two years —

Sandra Margulies: The bar association in San Francisco.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, bar association in San Francisco, legal ethics committee in 1979 two years after I started at Bronson and I worked with them until I became the chair of that committee and even beyond but then I wanted to branch out and go for the State because the State bar really had a much broader scope. So, I applied for the COPRAC, the Committee on Professional Responsibility and Conduct. That was State bar and I got on that so I transitioned away from the local because I couldn't -- I didn't have time to do both. So, I transitioned to the State bar, COPRAC committee and I was on that committee for four or five years and then I was the chair of that.

Sandra Margulies: Now, you were also president of the Contra Costa Bar Association, is that correct?

Ignazio Ruvolo: No, I was the president of the legal ethics. What happen was after the earthquake in 89, do you want me to hold on? Bronson had an office in Walnut Creek and I was living out in that area in Contra Costa County. After the 89 earthquake and the shutting of the Bay Bridge down for those months. I decided that I would at least camp out at Bronson's Walnut Creek office and do my work out there.

Sandra Margulies: And see how it went?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, my secretary also lived in Walnut Creek. So, it was pretty handy. So, she loved that, so she came out as well and we didn't have to deal with the damage commute. Then what happened was the managing partner at that office retired and so the management of Bronson here asked me to stay and become the managing partner of the Walnut Creek office which I did and that was 90 or 91 that I became the managing partner and I held that position until I became a judge, it's 94.

Sandra Margulies: So, at some point, your thoughts went to becoming a judge?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right.

Sandra Margulies: Do you know when that was?

Ignazio Ruvolo: It was not that long before I applied. It was probably 93 something like that. Sometime like a year before I got appointed. I just thought – "okay," -- I was trying to take a look at my long-range plan. Here I was, I was a pretty relatively high up by then partner in a major law firm in the Bay Area. I thought "okay, what more am I going to do? I am now in Walnut Creek," which was fine and as I said earlier that I got involved with the Contra Costa Bar and their legal ethics I brought to them the opportunity to have legal ethics expertise to enrich that bar activity that they needed. But anyway, I started looking around I said, "you know what, it's time for me to think about my next step" and the next step I'd want to stay in litigation and to me was just a natural transition to go from being a lawyer, a litigator and trial lawyer to being a trial judge and I talked to some people about it and they thought I would be a very good candidate for the judiciary and so I put my name in.

Sandra Margulies: And you became a judge in 1994?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Correct, January.

Sandra Margulies: And which governor appointed you?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Pete Wilson.

Sandra Margulies: And that was the Contra Costa Superior Court?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right, I never met Wilson. Actually, that's not 100% accurate. I met him once in sometime in the 90s before I came here. So, it was that first few years and there was a big campaign -- state campaign maybe it was early 96s. I met him at a fundraiser in Contra Costa County and there was this the big line of people, we were all shaking hands and I wanted to meet him and thank him for what he had done for me. So, and he was right in front of the band. So, just as I got up to him to thank him, the band cranked up and there was no way he could hear me and I have my whole you know "Governor, it's so glad to meet you.

You changed my life", the usual commentary that one in that position goes through, but I'm sure he just smiled at me and shook my hand.

00:40:08

Sandy Margulies: And it may interfere with your big opportunity.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, that was my chance to meet people.

Sandy Margulies: So, how long were you on Contra Costa Superior Court?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I was on that court for just about three years, two years and 11 months.

Sandy Margulies: And what were your assignments?

Ignazio Ruvolo: My first year, I was – okay, this is how this happen. So, I got appointed and I went over and Doug Swagger, he was in this division. He was the PJ at Contra Costa the year I got appointed.

Sandy Margulies: I heard many stories about his experiences as PJ at Contra Costa.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Oh yeah, I'm sure, you heard a lot of them.

Sandy Margulies: Yes.

Ignazio Ruvolo: So, I went over as a courtesy to meet him and introduce myself to him because I didn't really know him. And I said -- it was now January, so the assignments had just started for the new year and I said, "where are you going to stick me now? He says, "well, we've got—" he says, "I can put you in felony trials." I said, "okay." So, I never --

Sandy Margulies: With no criminal law background.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I know. So, I got went home and I called CJER here in the city and I said, "send me everything you've got that you used for orientation at criminal law." So, a few days later, I come back from work and trying to clear up my work at Bronson and there was a big package on the front steps of the house and I opened it up, of course back in those days, it was all video cassettes and a lot of writing and so on. I watched the videos and I read -- who was the guy that had the sentencing in handbook.

Sandy Margulies: Ryan Jeff.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Ryan Jeff. Yeah, right. So, I was reading that. Of course, I kept the copy of that on my bench because --

Sandy Margulies: It's a good handbook.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Very good, very good. So, I was ready to go and that was -- when was that? That was January, okay. I was appointed on January 6 and I was sworn in on the 21st. So, I only had a couple weeks to get up and

running and close out my practice at Bronson, it was a pretty short time. But I did it and I started on the 21st of January in the felony department.

Sandy Margulies: Now, do you remember what your first felony trial is?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I don't, but I do remember is that three-strikes law had just been passed and became effective the beginning in 94. And I had the second three-strikes case that was tried in our county and that the public defender himself tried that case. So, it was a pretty notable evident for me. I don't remember my first jury trial. I'm sure that I had some small ones in the beginning. Although I do remember early in that time, we are picking a jury and one of the defense lawyers said, "Your Honor, I'd like to make a Batson motion." So, I said, "okay, it's time for break and when we get back, we'll take up your motion." So, we took a break and I ran to the phone and I called Marciano up. This is another justice from --

Sandy Margulies: Who was on Contra Costa?

Ignazio Ruvolo: He was on Contra Costa Superior Court and then he was the PJ of your division. So, I called him and I said, "Jim, what the heck is a Batson motion?" Because those things don't come in civil, I mean, a couple of times, but never in my cases. So, he explained it to me and we went back and picked up from there. It's all about learning process.

Sandy Margulies: Yes, I remember those experiences. My first one was I was sent an unlawful detainer and it was a section eight and I don't know anything about section eight. I did the same thing I got on the phone with Peggy Horne. What do I do.?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah.

Sandy Margulies: So, did you have any other assignments besides felony?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I do. I have one year of felony trials and then they had a vacancy in the civil and Ellen James was the supervising judge of civil in Contra Costa and she wanted me to come over. And Doug said, "I could." So, I went over. Back then, we had the -- what was it called, the civil trial --

Sandy Margulies: Direct calendaring?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, it was a direct calendaring system, there was a name for the program. I forgotten it. I can't remember it right now. But we had four departments dedicated to civil and we had a direct calendaring system.

00:45:05

There was a pilot program back then for the State to see if direct calendaring was an answer to the surge in cases that were being filed. And I did that for two years, or almost two years and then I got my appointment.

Sandy Margulies: So, what prompted you to apply at the Court of Appeal?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay. I got a call from -- I won't mention the name of the justice because I never publicly mentioned the justice's name, but I got a call from the justice on this court who has asked me, "Naz, have you ever thought about the Court of Appeal?" And I said, "not really, I've only been here." Back then, it was like two-and-a-half years – two and a half years, I thought I'd stay here a little longer, and the justice's response was, "well, we all have our time and this is your time. There is a vacancy in division two and we think you would be a good person to take that position." And I was encouraged to put in my name and I did. I think it was like in May that I got this call, May of 96, and I went through the process and by December, I was appointed.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, very quickly. That's very quickly.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, it was very quick. It is very quick and actually I was -- it was early December that both the PJ and I, we were confirmed the same day by the commission. She was an hour or so. So, I have seniority over a year, she just tells me that and she was an hour or more because her hearing first.

Sandy Margulies: Just a backtrack.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Sure.

Sandy Margulies: Did you find it difficult to transition from private practice to the trial court?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Fortunately, not that much. I mean, I've came and right away I went to NJO which --

Sandy Margulies: New Judges Orientation.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, New Judges Orientation. It was a fantastic program. It was very well-developed even back in the 90s and that really helped. The only thing I had to stop doing is trying to overthink what the lawyers were doing. "Gosh, what are they doing in that way?" I wouldn't have asked that question. Why not emphasize this, I didn't talk to the lawyers about it, but I would intellectualize it for a while and then I realized, "hey, look I only know 10% of what they know about their case." So, give that up and I did. I did and I stopped doing that pretty early on at my time.

Sandy Margulies: So, who nominated you to the Court of Appeal? Which Governor?

Ignazio Ruvolo: It was Wilson, again. Wilson nominated me and he had a lot of -- back then, he had a lot of appointees here and nominees that are already on this court.

Sandy Margulies: So, you came on the Court of Appeal in 1996? Is that right?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yes. Yeah, December 8, something like that.

Sandy Margulies: So, did you find it difficult to transition over here?

Ignazio Ruvolo: It was different. As I said earlier that I'd love writing and doing legal research. So, it didn't take me long to realize that despite my love for the court room, this was even a better fit for me. As you know from years in the trial court, is a very fast paced. It's all shoot from the hip, there is not a lot of thought process that you -- time for thought process that you have. You don't do a lot of writing, it's all oral --

Sandy Margulies: Ruling from the bench.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, ruling from the bench. We did have research, attorneys helped us a little bit, although I did most in my own law in motion. I had Tuesday's law in motion the day was Tuesday and I would come in on Monday and get those tentative rulings out and I did most of that work myself. But transitioning here, it was very quiet.

Sandy Margulies: That's why I asked.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah. Very quiet. That was hard to get. But see, if you are going to do work at your desk or in the law library, it's got to be quiet so you're not distracted.

00:50:04

But I missed -- I missed the excitement of the court -- the courtroom and the courthouse. We had good staff over in Contra Costa as well as the people here, so much better resources here though.

Sandy Margulies: And you get time to think?

Ignazio Ruvolo: You have time to think, I mean as I said early on in my career here that if I get it wrong, I have nobody else to blame but myself, because we've got all the time in the world to make the right decision.

Sandy Margulies: So, who were your colleagues in Division 2?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay, I was put in Division 2, so Tony Klein was the -- was the PJ then and Jim Lemna was there and Paul Harley, and I was with them as a group until 06 when I was put as PJ of Division 4. So we worked together for almost 10 years and in Division 2 it was --

Sandy Margulies: How would -- how would you generally describe that experience?

Ignazio Ruvolo: It was fantastic. You know, Tony was a great mentor, I mean, you know, despite his idiosyncrasies, you know, I adored the guy and he was totally intellectually involved in the work, and I remember the --the first case that I wrote myself that we were going to publish, People v. Allen, and he walked like circulated the case and he came into my -- my chambers and walked right up to my desk. I said, Hi Tony, what's going on? And he had the draft in his hand and he flipped it on my desk and he says, that draft is analytically flawed. I said, okay, let's sit down, let's talk about.

Sandy Margulies: Well, he certainly wasn't subtle about.

Ignazio Ruvolo: No, no, but he was very -- he was very upfront about his feelings and, you know, I know that he wasn't trying to hurt my feelings about it, he just --

Sandy Margulies: Oh, it's him.

Ignazio Ruvolo: -- you know, yeah, he was just there. Anyway, we ended up, he dissented in that case. I can't remember whether it was Paul or Jim who went with me on it, but the Supreme Court's, okay, it was a kidnapping case.

Sandy Margulies: What was the issue?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Is there a minimum distance.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, yes.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, minimum distance for a kidnapping, and we wrote that it was more -- that distance was not the only criteria that it was also whether the person had been moved to a more dangerous location, and in this case they had, and so we affirmed the conviction. Supreme Court took the case up and then affirmed us.

Sandy Margulies: Yes, you were affirmed.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, but anyway, that's -- I loved it up into, it was a quite a good experience.

Sandy Margulies: So, why did you decide to apply to be presiding Justice of Division 4?

Ignazio Ruvolo: You know, just like when I decided that, you know, I was going to, you know, go to justice and leave justice, I mean it was, it was a career thing, it's kind of like, okay, you know, I could do this, I've been on the court now for about 10 years, that's an opportunity for me to get into the administration of the court and do more and use my experience to help further where the court is going, and so I put my name in.

Sandy Margulies: And you became presiding Justice.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I became a presiding Justice in Division 4.

Sandy Margulies: And which governor?

Ignazio Ruvolo: That was Schwarzenegger.

Sandy Margulies: That was Schwarzenegger? Okay.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, I never met, I never met him either, so.

Sandy Margulies: You're zero for zero.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I know.

Sandy Margulies: Or 0 for 2, I guess over 0 for 2.

Ignazio Ruvolo: 0 for 3.

Sandy Margulies: So, how -- how did it differ being a presiding Justice?

Ignazio Ruvolo: We had a different crew back when I -- when I was there, it was Tim and Pat Sepulveda and Maria.

Sandy Margulies: So, Tim Reardon, Pat Sepulveda and Maria Rivera.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right, were there when I -- when I got over there and it was a different -- it was a different group, Pat and Tim were very conservative on the criminals' work in particular and -- and we didn't quite have that bent, that philosophy if you will.

Sandy Margulies: In Division 2?

Ignazio Ruvolo: In Division 2, it was more moderate, but I got along, I enjoyed working with all my new colleagues, Tim was a dear and Maria too, and then Pat retired, Pat Sepulveda retired.

Sandy Margulies: I should know when.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Five years, six years ago.

Sandy Margulies: Yeah, five or six years ago.

00:54:55

Ignazio Ruvolo: Ago, and then we had the whole, you know, the cart goes -- the rotation of pro tems and then, you know, Jim Humes was appointed and he lasted a year and then he came here as PJ and then we had more pro tems, so it started -- it started, we had more personnel changes than we did in 2.

Sandy Margulies: So by the time you retired, it was you, Tim Reardon, John Streeter.

Ignazio Ruvolo: John Streeter -- well, Maria had just left.

Sandy Margulies: Just left.

Ignazio Ruvolo: So -- yeah, so we had --

Sandy Margulies: So you had a pro tem again?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Ethan -- Ethan came over from the city to set pro tem in our chambers when I left. So Ethan was still there when I left.

Sandy Margulies: So how do you enjoy your experience or not enjoyed it?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I loved it. I loved the work on the Court of Appeal was fantastic. I love writing. I wrote a lot of cases myself, of course I had the help of two really good research attorneys.

Sandy Margulies: That you had?

Ignazio Ruvolo: I had good people.

Sandy Margulies: You had excellent research.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, I did, even as they retired I was lucky I got new ones who were just as good.

Sandy Margulies: No, you always had excellent research attorneys.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, and they would have, you know, I always had them review the stuff that I wrote from scratch.

Sandy Margulies: Yeah, I do that too.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, and it's helpful. In the beginning, you know, they're not that critical but then as they get to know you better and realize you're not going to bite their head off if they say they don't like this or that, you know, they're -- they're more outspoken. I enjoyed them.

Sandy Margulies: So, what cases and/or achievements are you most proud of as an appellate Justice?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay, well -- can I look at my notes? Let's see, okay, I had a lot of -- the Allen case was a great way to start.

Sandy Margulies: Yeah, that's a big deal.

Ignazio Ruvolo: And I had a couple good divorce cases and (00:56:58) was an important one that allow the allocation of income to an unemployed supported spouse. Okay, if he or she had the ability to work, then the court could impute income to them for purposes of -- did you say family law?

Sandy Margulies: I didn't, but I understand the significance of that case.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay, yeah, anyway, that was one of my early cases, that and Allen, those were the two cases I decided very early on that I remember. The other marriage case was in re Marriage of Barry Bonds.

Sandy Margulies: That's right, I forgot that you had that case, yes.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, we had that case in Division 2, and you know, they had a pre-nup and whether the pre-nup was -- was enforceable or not and Lambdin wrote that --

Sandy Margulies: Yes, I remember.

Ignazio Ruvolo: -- and said -- yeah, and said that it was not enforceable for a number of reasons that it was coercive and this and that and I -- and Tony went with him and then I wrote a dissent and said no, no, no, under the Uniform Marital Relations Act this meets all the criteria, da…. da… da… and it wasn't required that Son Bonds, the spouse, had to have a lawyer at the meeting at which time this was discussed.

So anyway, so I just dissented in that case, it went up in Supreme Court, and they reversed, but I didn't have the last laugh because after the reversal, the legislature changed the uniform marital -- uniform marital, whatever it's called.

Sandy Margulies: A premarital agreement.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, right, Settlement Act and now said that there was a -- if they didn't have -- if one of the spouses does not have a lawyer, it's presumed unfair unless the one who did have a lawyer can show under the circumstances that it was not -- that there was no unfairness to it, so they changed the law, so that one nearly kind of -- it was a lot of fun, but that didn't go anywhere. I had a case where there was a challenge to the high school exit exam.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, yes.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, which show -- was on the books until just a couple of years ago last year or the year before and it was being challenged by minority student groups who claimed that it disadvantaged them. If they had to take a uniform test in order to graduate and it unfairly discriminated against them because they didn't have the same education, ability and rights and opportunities that other students had and so on.

01:00:01

But we affirmed the exit exam and allowed it to go forward. So that was kind of a pretty big case. I had a lot big CEQA cases when I was here.

Sandy Margulies: And those are complicated.

Ignazio Ruvolo: They are complicated. I had the Oakland Airport.

Sandy Margulies: Under the Oakland Airport?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, boy.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I'll come to airport, the new, the international terminal when they put that in. Yeah, and it goes back long time to go off for these cases to get up there. But I had that -- keep jets off the bay. It was challenging.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, I didn't know yet that one.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, that was to keep you just off the bay that was at your county. That was the Oakland Airport. I had the Chevron Refinery in Contra Costa renovations. That was big sequel case. I had the development of Treasure Island. That's a new one. This just happened a couple years ago when I had and passed the sequel environmental impact conclusions to allow the Treasure Island develop and to go forward. I don't think it started yet, but anyway, that's up to them in the Federal Government. I had a sand mining case in the bay and whether that required a CEQA pre-approval.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, EIR.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yeah, that was it. And actually the Division IV just filed a couple months ago a return to that and it was a public trust doctor. In addition to CEQA, he said no CEQA doesn't apply but the public trust doctor does because the state owns the sand in the bay. And we sent it back down for the Trial Court to make a determination as to whether the public trust doctor who was being violated by the state giving the sands to a private commercial dredger who then took it and sold it for concrete, to be used in concrete. And it came back just recently, just few months ago that was reheard in four and they said, no that was not a public trust doctor in violation, so that was a good case.

I had a big licensing case that came out of Southern California Metavation versus UC Regions. Metavation was a private company who worked with UC in helping them develop cancer treatments for pancreatic cancer. So it's a big thing.

Sandy Margulies: That's a big deal.

Ignazio Ruvolo: So, the UC got the patents and there was a big fight with Metavation over what the agreement had been between the Metavation and the Regions as to the scope of the licensing? That Metavation would have in order to manufacture under these patents, and so we litigated that case. I was in Division IV by then. That was a very interesting big case. I had a case in rising out of the Burning Man Festival.

Sandy Margulies: Oh, yes. I'm familiar with Burning Man.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Beninati v. Rock City, I think it was called that developed the sponsor of the Burning Man Festival. Actually, it was kind of a new question is whether assumption of the risk applies, voluntary assumption of the risk applies in a non-sport context.

Sandy Margulies: That's right.

Ignazio Ruvolo: And we said, it does. What happened was he went up there to tribute a friend of his which is a big part of the festival and he walked through the bonfires to put the tribute on the bonfire, and he tripped and fell and he fell into the ashes into the embers and he sued the developer, the festival organizer saying that they should have had, you know, more -- more barriers around it. So, we said, no. No, that's a voluntary

assumption of the risk. Supreme Court took that one and they affirmed as well. So, that was an interesting case.

I've had a number of cases challenging the enforceability of private arbitration clauses. So over the years I think four. Four published cases dealing with private arbitration agreements. (01:04:50). Criminal. The Allen case mentioned. I had, ah, you'll know this case. Velez v. Superior Court.

01:05:02

Sandy Margulies: Yes. Yes.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I don't think you were involved in that case. This is a case where you had a local rule in your county that required post-trial the juror information sheets, that you give to the counsel had to be returned to the court.

Sandy Margulies: Correct. I remember that case and that was past my time on the Superior Court. But I remember when it was here.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right. And we said that they did not have to return, that would be a violation of the Constitutional rights of the public attorney's office.

Sandy Margulies: I remember that.

Ignazio Ruvolo: So that was a big case in criminal law. Gosh, I don't know, how many more do you want me to go through?

Sandy Margulies: Well, you know what I wanted. I don't want to end this interview without talking about your contributions on the Commission on Judicial Performance.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay.

Sandy Margulies: And --

Ignazio Ruvolo: But I would just want to say.

Sandy Margulies: Yup.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I published a 180 published cases that I wrote over 3,000 so --

Sandy Margulies: That's a lot.

Ignazio Ruvolo: That's a lot.

Sandy Margulies: That's a lot.

Ignazio Ruvolo: That's quite a few, but anyway.

Sandy Margulies: So, when did you become a member of the Commission?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay. I became a member of the Commission in 2013 and I was there for five years. I was made Vice-Chair in 2016, and then I was made Chair. I only served one year as Chair and that was from 2017 to last March 2018 when I decided to retire.

Sandy Margulies: So, how would you describe your experience on the Commission?

Ignazio Ruvolo: It was the most challenging thing that I've done as either a lawyer or a judge. And it's challenging because of the nature of the work.

Sandy Margulies: I want you to explain for the uninitiated watching this video.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay. The Commission is the Commission on Judicial Performance and it's a 11-person Commission, made up of three judges, two lawyers and six public members. And we are charged with reviewing complaints of misconduct against judges statewide and making investigations where appropriate, and then deciding whether there should be discipline imposed, and what the level of discipline can be. And it could go anywhere from an advisory letter, to a public admonishment, to a censure, to removal. The last couple require a public hearing before formal proceedings, before we could use censure or remove judges or justices.

Sandy Margulies: Had you ever participated as one of the Panel judges in a hearing?

Ignazio Ruvolo: No. Special Master, no.

Sandy Margulies: See, I have done that.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Oh, you have? Okay.

Sandy Margulies: Yes. So, I was just curious if you would have done it.

Ignazio Ruvolo: No, I hadn't. But anyway, so we get 1,200 to 1,300 complaints a year and most of them come from litigants or friends of litigants or family members, and most of them are complaints about the result, about the fact that they lost. And we always investigate. You don't have an investigator to contact then and say, why do you think the judge was unfair or engaged in misconduct? And he said, "Well, because I lost the case."

And I would say that, 90% of the cases were resolved that way and for that reason. 10% of the cases we would go further and have much more extensive investigations, we have staff who do the investigations for us, and then write up the results of their investigation and submit it to the Commission --

Sandy Margulies: And much of your staff, they are attorneys.

Ignazio Ruvolo: They are. They are attorneys and some of them are ex-DAs, so you know, they're used to doing this work. And then the Commission, we would decide everyone, even the ones that I mentioned earlier that were summarily dismissed. We would get short summaries of those reports,

those memoranda relating to those. And then, we would have a consent calendar where we would, you know, it says, anybody disagree with the recommendation to close those. So, we spent most of our time on the more serious case, complaints that we had.

But there is a very strong understanding of the significance of that work both on for the public safety, public good as well as respecting the office, the discretionary elements of judicial law office and knowing that the reputation of judges are at risk.

Sandy Margulies: Are the majority of complaints related to demeanor?

Ignazio Ruvolo: The majority of the complaints for which discipline is imposed related to demeanor, I would say yes, by far. We had a fair number of election campaigning issues, but I would say that and some that deal with conflicts of interest and refusal to recuse and so on. But demeanor is by far the most, the highest number and I have to tell you what makes it additionally stressful is that there is very little understanding because it's all confidential. So, the public has very little understanding and access to information about how we operate and because of that, and because the high percentage of complaints that are dismissed, they are very cynical as to whether we are really doing the right job for the public good or whether we're just covering up for judges. And they used the numbers against us all the time.

Sandy Margulies: But now I think it should be clear that the majority of members of the commission now are not judges.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Correct. That's true and we changed that some years ago and we raised that to the public, but they think that that they're political hacks or that they are not doing the job. Then on the other side, the judges would disagree every time we want to discipline somebody.

Sandy Margulies: They're not happy.

Ignazio Ruvolo: They're not happy. So, this is an operation that's so important to the integrity of the administration of justice in the state but for which there is no pat on the back at all. So that makes it a very stressful. And then of course, my last year, we had the executive director retire, so I had to find a new -- Victoria Henley, so we had to replace her so we had on top of all the work, we had to go through that process and in addition, we were fighting with the state auditor that wanted to come in and audit. They are there now, they're upstairs right now.

Sandy Margulies: Right, they're doing an audit.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Right, because we settled the lawsuit that we had won with them so that they would have access to the confidential records and they changed the loss of that access by the state auditor to CJP's records was not subject to the Public Records Act.

Sandy Margulies: What are the auditors examining? I mean, are they looking at your statistics or --

Ignazio Ruvolo: Well, they are beyond that. They're looking at – they told us they were not going to second guess. They just wanted to make sure that the process was working as well as it could, but without saying, why did you decide on public admonishment here when you should have removed him. They don't have the expertise to do that and they promised they were not going to do that. They're still up there for another couple of months and then we will see when their reports get issued, maybe later this year if they are going to hold to that and what kind of recommendations they are going to make. But we will see.

Sandy Margulies: Now, as chair of the committee, did you find you had more responsibility or --

Ignazio Ruvolo: Yes, especially with those added, in addition to helping move the work that we had to do and help put the agendas together and so on, I spent about a third of my time my last year here, working with the commission, working on the commission. I was upstairs all the time.

Sandy Margulies: Big time commitment.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Big time, it was couple of hours every day.

Sandy Margulies: So, if you had any advice to give judges, based on your experience on the commission, what would it be?

For most of them, keep doing what they are doing. I mean, I have great respect for virtually all of the justices that I have worked with not only here but also like statewide in these various committees and commissions that I have been on besides the CJP. And they are all dedicated, they are all trying to do that right thing, they are trying to come to the right conclusion and I admire them. So, keep doing what you are going to do, don't get distracted and stay calm.

Sandy Margulies: So, just to finish things off, can you talk briefly about your teaching career at the law school?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay. I taught at three separate law schools over the time that I have been a judge. I started after I became a judge. I first taught when I was at Contra Costa at JF Kennedy School of Law, which was an unaccredited school and it was night, it was people who were trying to transition out of whatever career they had or job they had and wanted to become lawyers and had to go take classes at night and I taught professional responsibility, legal ethics to them and then I came back here. When I came here, I got on the Hastings faculty, adjunct faculty, and I taught probably six or seven years. I taught a seminar, limited to 18 students and they were, most of them were 2Ls or 3Ls, and it was on judicial process but I taught it from the perspective of the bench, not – I'm a lawyer and I'm going to tell you how to write a good brief. It was I'm a judge and I want you to look at the briefs from the judge's perspective because that's your audience. And you read these briefs and you tell me did you understand the problem? What would you have liked to have to known more about? Was it well-written, was it too

snippy, was it a distraction and I tried to teach them from that perspective how to write briefs, how to make oral arguments, we came here, I had a one case that I have preserved on videotape that was our – the case that they used for their final and they wrote an opinion, that was their final. At first, the first year or so too, I tried to have them in panels of three. The problem with that is it was a race to the bottom and some of the students, if you had a law review person in that group, that law review person was going to do all the work because the other students were going push this on them.

Sandy Margulies: That is a problem with group projects.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I know, so I stopped that after a year or two and then everybody and I said okay, well, we're going to lose the collegial, the consensual judging part of this but it has to go. So, we stopped doing that and they wrote their own briefs. Then I also, I tried this the third month. So, I did that for about six to eight years and then at the end of my teaching, I taught at Golden Gate and I went back to teaching legal ethics.

Sandy Margulies: So, in your years of teaching, did you see a change in law students, anything different about them based on from when you started to when you finished up?

Ignazio Ruvolo: No, I mean – they were, it was already, when I started teaching it was already a pretty diverse student population. So, there wasn't that much change or a lot of women in there, lot of minorities in school.

Sandy Margulies: Any change in attitude or approach?

Ignazio Ruvolo: No, it seemed to me that everybody was trying to do the best they could. The night students had the biggest challenge because --

Sandy Margulies: They're working during the day.

Ignazio Ruvolo: They're working during the day and they – the entry requirements at JFK were lower than certainly Hastings and for Golden Gate as well. And so, the students weren't that academically oriented as the other schools were. So, it was harder for them to do well, but we had some good ones though.

Sandy Margulies: Pardon me?

Ignazio Ruvolo: But we had some good ones at JFK. But I'm saying just broadly the student body.

Sandy Margulies: Right. So, as my last question, I'd like to ask you what was your judicial philosophy and did it evolve or change over the years you were on the bench?

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay. No, it did not. My judicial philosophy has always been, do the right thing and I mean that both in terms of come to the right decision, the decision that I think is the right decision for and have it reasoned, a good reasoned decision and also to present myself in a way that honors

the judiciary and do the right thing in terms of my interactions with the lawyers, with the parties, with my colleagues, with staff. I worked here for just to give you a little example, I was a judge for 24 years and I never hugged anybody in my staff or who worked at the court. You know, they knew that I liked them, they knew that I was, you know, I had strong feelings for them, you know, proper feelings for them, having worked together as long as I did but I just had that line that I wouldn't cross, I would not hug anybody. That's just kind of an anecdotal point as to just do what you think is the right thing, vis-à-vis, your ethics, your conduct and your decision making.

Sandy Margulies: So, I want to thank Justice Ruvolo.

Ignazio Ruvolo: My pleasure.

Sandy Margulies: For interviewing and it was absolutely delightful.

Ignazio Ruvolo: I miss you. I miss my colleagues.

Sandy Margulies: I miss you too. It was an absolutely delightful interview. I'd learned some new things about you

Ignazio Ruvolo: Okay.

Sandy Margulies: And you're one fascinating person.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Thank you very much. I enjoy being here. And good seeing you.

Sandy Margulies: It was nice to see you.

Ignazio Ruvolo: Bye.

01:22:05