



I needed passage of time to gain perspective and opportunity to organize my thoughts and feelings. This 8th International Criminal Law Conference was by all accounts very successful in terms of attendance, representation from participants from around the world, quality of seminar presentations, diversity of supporters and sponsors, money raised, and impact to our SoCal Chapter. Our KPA Board did what was expected. Surprisingly, a former board member from long ago was instrumental in steering us through the maze of potential sponsors in Orange County for which I'm forever grateful. Many speak of supporting an organization but few actually comes through. Following each conference, we go through lessons learned assessment at the next board meeting. Each conference has its good, the bad, and the ugly. As I received many accolades for this year's conference, I consider this conference a personal failure on my part, the ugly.

I know there are always some missteps when you put on a conference like this and it's never perfect. It didn't help that there was a big gap in time between conferences due to COVID and what becomes a routine is no longer that. Similar to conducting a trial, something unexpected always occur that will throw off your entire game plan and you deal with it. I've always dealt with it. For inexplicable reason, I failed miserably at this year's gala dinner.

It's been a long-held KPA tradition that I acknowledge its President at the awards dinner as the President's two-year term comes to an end. At this year's dinner, it would have been my privilege to acknowledge Sophia Choi's term as its 7th President. I had an outline of my speech prepared, and I totally failed to deliver it. Following the awards gala, I was reminded by a board member and I literally felt sick to my stomach. As much as our community celebrated Sophia's appointment and enrobement as a Riverside County Superior Court Judge, this night should have been a celebration of Sophia's tenure as a KPA member and ending with her Presidency. I can't recall the last time I had this kind of professional mishap, why now and why Sophia of all people? There is no room for excuses and I'm not looking for consolation. This is mea culpa.

I deeply apologize to Sophia; her family and friends; Riverside colleagues and community; and KPA Board, SoCal Chapter, and KPA members. The following is the speech that should have been delivered:

I first met Sophia and her sister Sylvia over 13 years ago when KPA was first formed. Our then Board member Billy Shin (3rd KPA President) convinced them to join KPA. Without hesitation, they not only joined but became active members. Back then, all of our meetings and events were in Los Angeles and in person. Without a doubt, they drove the longest distance of all KPA members to attend these events. In hindsight, we should have acknowledged their dedication to KPA as I cannot fathom driving that distance on a regular basis for so many years. I must thank Sophia's mom as I'm sure she did most of the driving.

At first, Sophia appeared shy and reserved. But mind you, that was my ignorance. Once you work with her, you will quickly realize where her passion and commitment lie. There is no compromise in her beliefs. I can visualize her presence in court and by no means is this a person you want to underestimate. Beyond her intestinal fortitude, she is a kind and generous person. She makes every effort to make everyone comfortable and at ease. She builds consensus and lead by example. These are all positive qualities making her an invaluable board member of KPA.

Sophia has held number of positions including Secretary of KPA and KPA Justice Foundation. She also headed the education committee by establishing KPA as a Continuing Legal Education certified provider from the California State Bar. Additionally, she established KPA as a certifying organization for the President's Volunteer Service Award program. Over the years, through her and her family's generosity, KPA was able to hold number of events at her home which saved us money but more, created an environment for networking amongst KPA members and law enforcement partners. She single-handedly brought the Riverside County into KPA's inventory of prominent geographic importance and invaluable resource.

Finally, this year's unprecedented conference in Orange County was spearheaded and championed by Sophia. I must admit that I was resistant to the idea of selecting O.C. as KPA did not have much history or contact there. She was able to connect with Dean Parrish of University of California, Irvine School of Law,

her former law professor. With support and collaboration with Dean Parrish, we were able to establish a venue for our conference seminar thus providing tremendous financial relief. Her efforts did not end there but continued by seeking out and securing number of sponsors for the conference.

Unless your directly involved in planning one of these International Criminal Law Conferences, you have no idea of the demands and challenges that come forth. I couldn't believe how Sophia worked on the conference to the very last day before she had to retire from her office to embark on her judicial assignment. I told her she needed some time off before she started her new chapter of her life. But, I also knew it wasn't like her to just abandon KPA so she can rest for a little bit. She was committed to the success of this conference and I also knew she had mixed feelings about leaving KPA at this vital time. She tried to extend her start time as a judge so she can devote additional time to KPA and to wrap up her work at the Riverside District Attorney's Office. Unfortunately, Riverside County Superior Court needed her services right away.

Over a decade plus, I developed an amazing relationship with Sophia, the best of friendship rivaling my relationship with my own sister. We always support and praise each other's success. We are free to be honest with each other knowing that we are each-others best confidant. I so respect her and am proud of her accomplishments. I'm not sure if she is fully aware of this, she is a role model for the next generation. She works incredibly hard and positions herself where opportunities come her way. That is the road map for success. My dear friend, please forgive me for depriving an opportunity to share these words with our dinner guests. I hope these words will live longer and reach more people than just that one moment in time.

Yours truly,



JERRY C. BAIK
Executive Director