



Casmir Sondey '80, a municipal court judge and an attorney in private practice in Wallington, N.J., explains the influence of his Jesuit education permeates in his life and plays an active role in decision-making on the bench. Below, he enjoys a moment with his niece, Danielle Sondey.

80

Casmir 'Cas' Sondey

SONDEY FINDS 'ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY' AT SCRANTON

Hon. Casmir "Cas" Sondey '80 has proven he isn't afraid to change course.

After graduating from Bergen Community College and spending a year at William Paterson University – close to his New Jersey home – Sondey felt the need for change and transferred to The University of Scranton.

"I realized my college years were a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I wanted the living-away experience. That's when I started looking around, and I stumbled on The University of Scranton," recalls Sondey.

While Sondey currently serves as a municipal court judge and an attorney in private practice in Wallington, N.J., where he was born and raised, law – like Scranton – was not on his original career path.

Sondey majored in accounting at Scranton and worked in the field for a decade before making a career switch in the early 1990s.

"I was out of school about 10 years before I went back to law school at night," he says. "It was a decision I had to make between an MBA and law school. When I was making my decision, there were a lot of layoffs going on. It dawned on me that if I got an MBA, I would always be working in corporate America whereas with the law degree, the worst-case scenario was that I could always hang a shingle and fend for myself."

Sondey credits Scranton with giving him the self-confidence he needed to advance in his professional career.

"Coming from a small high school, I don't think I understood the world of possibilities available to me," Sondey says. "By attending the University, I realized I was able to compete with other students from bigger school systems and probably more affluent school systems. It gave me the encouragement that I could go forward and compete."

Even though Sondey hasn't walked the Commons as a student in 30 years, he admits the institution's Jesuit influence still permeates in his life.

"The Jesuits make you aware of the world around you; it isn't just what goes on in your 10x10 office but the greater world," he says. "It gives you a sense of belonging and responsibility not just to yourself but to the bigger picture, to the bigger community around you. There is more expected of you than just getting a paycheck, paying some taxes and giving the occasional donation. You really have to go out there and pitch in."

Sondey carries that philosophy into his work. As municipal court judge, Sondey regularly presides over cases of people owing various debts to the borough of Wallington. He explains he sometimes vacates the fines when he feels the debtors need a fresh start.

"As a lawyer, everyone thinks we're on an hourly rate and that the clock is always ticking, but I would say that a very good portion of my time is spent pro bono," he

says. "I don't necessarily mean that the courts assign me to a client and I represent that client gratis. I mean the people who are in the middle to lower socioeconomic positions need advice just as much as the well-to-do. So I find myself spending a lot of time with those clients and not necessarily charging them for the services rendered."

Sondey shares his "Royal Pride" touting Scranton's academics and excellence to friends and their families who are considering higher education. And he's been a successful recruiter, too, playing a role in four students attending the University.

"People ask me about the Scranton experience and I will say without reservation that the greatest decision I ever made so far in my life was to attend The University of Scranton," Sondey says. "I think without that, I wouldn't be where I am today." 

