

4-1-1991

Gideon Kanner

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Recommended Citation

Alex Kozinski, *Gideon Kanner*, 24 Loy. L.A. L. Rev. 517 (1991).
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*Alex Kozinski**

What do you say about a guy known for his style and polish, his piercing wit, his awesome lawyering skills, his taste for fine food and wine, who signs off in letters to his friends with a cheerful "zey gesund"?¹ To those of us who have had the privilege of knowing and working with Gideon Kanner, he has been both an inspiration and a pain in the neck. An inspiration because he lives and lawyers the way the rest of us wish we could. Most of us have to work hard to come up with concise, vibrant language. Gideon makes it all look easy, producing reams of extremely persuasive briefs and articles that read like no lawyer's hand has touched them. A pain in the neck because he does not hesitate to let you know—in vivid terms—that your latest favorite opinion, your brainchild, is full of hot air. Alas, the black robe, the one that protects judges from so many of the slings and arrows of real life, is no shield at all against a precisely aimed barb from Gideon.

As he returns to the more-or-less full-time practice of law, it is appropriate to thank Gideon for the time he spent in the classroom, bending the minds of budding lawyers away from the conventional wisdom that makes up such a large chunk of the normal law school curriculum. We need more like him. But he'll be back, I'm sure, trumpet in hand, leading his one-man campaign against the mundane, the pompous, and the intellectually dishonest. And I'm afraid those of us on the bench are not destined to get a reprieve from his strict scrutiny. But, for the time being, we wish him Godspeed in this new phase of his illustrious career.

Zey gesund, Gideon.

* The author is a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

1. "Zey gesund," pronounced as it seems, means "be healthy" in Yiddish.