

Specter, Kline Form New Law Firm

Duo Set Up Shop On Their Own

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The Legal Intelligencer

For the past 11 years, attorneys Thomas R. Kline and Shanin Specter have had adjacent offices at Beasley Casey Collier Erbstein Thistle & Kline - first at the firm's offices on South 12th Street and again when the firm moved to its own building at 1125 Walnut Street.

Now that the two have left Beasley to set up their own firm, Kline & Specter, they still want their offices to be next to each other.

Standing in their raw office space Friday on the 19th floor at 1525 Locust St. - still sporting bare concrete floors and wires dangling from an unfinished ceiling - Kline and Specter described the floor plan they've designed for an office that is expected to be completed by mid- March. (Until then, they will be working out of temporary space on the 13th floor.)



At 47, Kline is 10 years Specter's senior, a fact that may explain why his office will be placed at the southern end of the room with a distinctive, large-bowed window that displays a far-reaching, panoramic view of the city extending to the industrial sites near the airport.

Kline's two legal assistants will have offices to the east and Specter will take the southwest corner, a spot that affords him an almost equally breathtaking view. Specter's two assistants will have offices on the western wall.

And although they're starting out with just one associate, they point out that the office will ultimately accommodate another three or four lawyers.

But the aspect of the design that clearly excites both men most is their idea to install a "pocket door" between their offices that will slide easily into a pocket in the wall whenever they want to confer.

As Specter explains, "when Tom wants to come and talk to me, he just slides the pocket door open and vice versa. Or maybe leave it open sometimes to have something like what the old investment banks had - what they called partners' desks, with one partner on one side of the desk and another partner on the other side.

"We want to do something where we are literally practicing law together. I get a tremendous amount of assistance from Tom - when I run into an issue, I run it by Tom - and he may get some help from me occasionally."

Kline concurred. "We want the southern view and we want something else, we want to work next to each other. While we're going to have walls, we're going to try to make our offices as integrated as possible. The idea is that we have Shanin and myself - who have immediate and constant interaction with each other - our assistants at our fingertips, and our files right in front of us."

"Terrific Environment"

As a small firm, Kline said, the space in a small building has an advantage over larger buildings like Liberty Place because it affords "a terrific work environment for everybody. Almost everyone, including staff, will have offices with windows."

Surveying the space before any walls have been installed, he said "the nice thing about this space is that you have this gorgeous view to the south and you get the city in the background and when it turns to dusk, it literally lights up like a fluorescent light."

In their 11 years together, Kline and Specter have had a string of successes in the area of product liability and catastrophic injury cases, beginning with their first assignment together on a drug products liability case assisting James Beasley that resulted in a verdict of more than \$7 million.

When asked if Kline was his mentor, Specter quickly said "I think both of us would have to say that Jim Beasley was our legal mentor. But over the past 11 years, Tom and I have spent a tremendous amount of time helping each other on our cases."

Beasley on Friday described the duo as "good lawyers."

"It's no surprise," he said of their departure. "It happens all across town every January."

"No Political Future"

But some lawyers were surprised that Specter had decided to start his own firm with Kline, saying they expected he would one day follow in the footsteps of his father, Sen. Arlen Specter, and run for political office.

In no uncertain terms, Specter said he has never wanted a political career, despite his service to his father as campaign manager, but has always wanted to be a trial lawyer.

"A lot of people know my work in campaigns because that work is public work, but that work is something that I have done for many years as an avocation, not as a vocation," Specter said.

"My life as a professional for the past 11 years has been as a trial lawyer with the Beasley firm. And people who know me very well know that I have never had an interest in an elective office or public office for myself."

And if his father decides to wage a campaign for President, Specter said his involvement will be limited.

Because his new firm is "a startup situation," Specter said "I expect that I will do no political work for the foreseeable future - certainly this year."

But he said he will still make time for his father if he decides to run in 1996.

"What he needs me for in that regard is something that need not be done between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. He needs me to talk with him about what he's doing and we can do that, as we customarily do, sometime between 8 o'clock and 11 o'clock at night."

Like the Beasley firm, Kline & Specter will concentrate in catastrophic injury and complex products liability cases.

Kline has earned notoriety in the field with several sizable verdicts, including a \$5.2 million verdict for a woman who used a Dalkon shield I.U.D.

"Benedictine Verdict"

His biggest verdict, which is soon to be noted as one of the 40 largest in 1994, came in a suit against Merrill Dow over the drug Benedictine, a nausea drug prescribed to pregnant women that has since been taken off the market.

The case, *Blum v. Merrill Dow*, had a tortured history in the courts. In 1982, a jury awarded \$1 million in compensatory damages and \$1 million in punitive damages.

The state Supreme Court overturned the verdict, saying it should not have been decided by just 11 jurors. Last spring, a jury awarded \$4.2 million in compensatory damages and \$15 million in punitive damages.