

Boutique Law Firms Celebrate at Supreme Court

TONY MAURO

A 10-year-old association of boutique law firms celebrated a coming of age earlier this month with a black-tie dinner at the U.S. Supreme Court, hosted by Justice Samuel Alito Jr.

"We're the best kept secret in the law," said Steven Spielvogel, founder of the International Network of Boutique Law Firms and partner at Gallion & Spielvogel in New York. "When I first created the organization, I would have never dared to imagine we would have a black-tie dinner at the Supreme Court. I'm still walking on air."

The dinner in the Great Hall of the court took place on Oct. 10, with more than 200 members attending. Nine members of the group, including Spielvogel, were sworn into the Supreme Court bar on Oct. 13.

"We started from nothing ten years ago. Convening in the majesty of the Supreme Court was like reaching a whole new level," the group's president, Charles Kagay of San Francisco's Spiegel Liao & Kagay, said.

The organization was created to match the networking and geographic scope of large law firms, allowing single-specialty boutiques to aid clients with issues in a different field, city or country. "There is a rigorous



U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SAMUEL A. ALITO JR.

Rick Kopstein

screening" of firms before they are allowed to join, Spielvogel said, adding that "we are not a political organization." Kagay said: "You can't just pay money to join."

In addition to helping boutique firms serve clients, the network helps members with legal business issues ranging from insurance to training. Nearly 300 law firms from nearly 40 countries are in the organization. The overseas firms tend to be larger, full-service law groups.

"Together, we can solve problems," said Nancie Marzulla of Marzulla Law in D.C. "We've all struck out on our own. Almost all of us are refugees of big law firms. We didn't want to keep trudging in to some big office."

Nancie Marzulla and her husband

and law partner Roger Marzulla were instrumental in inviting Alito as host. Both worked with Alito in the U.S. Department of Justice in the 1980s, and now have a boutique firm specializing in property rights and cases before the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

According to attendees, Alito in his talk discussed the history of the Supreme Court.

Contact Tony Mauro at tmauro@alm.com. On Twitter: @Tonymauro