**RETIREMENT SPEECH**

**FOR**

**DORIAN SANTOEMMA**

Hello everyone, I am Dorian Santoemma and it is both a pleasure and a privilege to say a few words about my colleague and good friend, Michele Emery. As some of you might know, Michele and I first met in a professional capacity....no... she wasn’t my probation officer... I do my best to follow the rules and laws! (**Wait for the laugh**). I did, however, have the opportunity to observe and acknowledge just how good she always

was at her job. We began as colleagues working together for the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch. That was in 1986. In a lot of ways, we grew up together in this business **(would you rather say profession? Choose which you think is more appropriate since Michele maintained different responsibilities than you**).

Back in the “good ole days” working in the Judicial Branch, it was new, exciting, and we were just starting out on our careers. No one really knows what to expect when beginning a new adventure, but we all hope those experiences provide professional fulfillment. It is really a plus when one has the great fortune to work with special, dedicated people... especially when true friendship develops. It was another Michelle.... Michelle Obama who said, “Whether you come from a council estate or a country estate, your success will be determined by your own confidence and fortitude.” We were building our skills, finding our strengths, honing our recognition of what matters to us as adults, and we were learning and growing from our newly formed friendships. Michele and I hit it off from the beginning and we became close friends. We worked together, somehow managed to have our kids at the same time, and we even job shared... at work... not mothering! (**Wait for the laugh**). Welll.... let me clarify... we shared our experiences of motherhood. We were there for each other for all sorts of mutual support and what would be dubbed, in today’s technologically correct language.... “information sharing.” We commiserated on kids... I shared about my sons, Zack and Luke, while Michele lovingly discussed Shane and Jake. We bonded over work and life and i always considered our friendship as one of the great gifts provided by the Judicial Branch of the State of Connecticut.

Over the years, Michele and I continued to work together, laugh together, cry together, and we supported each other through both good times and bad. We not only began our professional lives together, we shared marriages and divorce and the births of our children. We’ve commiserated over illness and the passing of a parent.... (**If his is so, you can add this for a bit of levity**) and paperwork... we shared lots of paperwork... (**and wait for the laugh**)

As time went by, and as nature and opportunity came calling over the years, our paths diverged. Recently, I was assigned to manage the region in which Michele is ... I mean **WAS** (**Wait for the laugh**) employed (**Is this the same region in which you two began together? If so you can say**), and you know when “They” say, “You can never go home again?” Not true!!! After all this time... of life changes and moves and marching along on our own paths to fulfillment, Michele and I have happily rekindled our relationship. It’s gratifying to know and to realize, when one is um.... older.... and wiser.... that the connections and friendships made in younger days turn out to be authentic. There is nothing better than having a good friend... unless it’s reconnecting with one.

And now Michele is “graduating” and moving on to the next adventures she will find on her path. Someone once said, “The only trouble with retirement is that you never get a day off...” (**Wait for the laugh**). Michele, as I look at you now, I think back to the way we were all those years ago. It’s so hard to believe that you started out as a police officer... I remember how shy you were when it came to speaking to a judge... I will never forget the time.... and I know you won’t either... as new employees, we had to go over to the Court... we knocked on the door to one of the Judge’s chambers and upon entry we were met by a female who asked, “Can I help you?” It was “enlightening” when Michele asked if the Judge was available.... From that encounter we still get a laugh... and now we know that yes.... the black robe **DOES** mean something! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Michele, throughout the years you have demonstrated an admirable consistency- in life and in work. You’ve shown us your true colors ... kindness and loyalty, as well as your fiery side.... when called for... your absolute and unwavering devotion to your parents and your children, Shane and Jake, and your continued close friendship with their father, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**name the ex-husband- probably better not to say ex husband**). It’s remarkable how much character and goodness is packed into that petite stature!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). I am proud to have you as my friend and colleague for so many years.

I know I speak for everyone when I say that we wish you all the best in your retirement. It is one of the facts of life that hard work, demonstrably consistent character, dedication, and professionalism pay off. May your next adventures be the best yet! Congratulations!