

1998

## Former C-GCC Graduate Relishes Work in Courtroom

Roger J. Miner '56

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/news>

 Part of the [Judges Commons](#), and the [Legal Profession Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Miner '56, Roger J., "Former C-GCC Graduate Relishes Work in Courtroom" (1998). *News Articles*. 12.  
<https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/news/12>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Honorable Roger J. Miner '56 Papers at DigitalCommons@NYLS. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Articles by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@NYLS.

# Former C-GCC graduate relishes work in courtroom

RS 3/15/98

GREENPORT — The year was 1989. The case was nothing you'd normally expect from Saratoga Springs.

"We were prosecuting a group of individuals for selling crack cocaine," said Paul Silver. "They were well organized, distributing large quantities on a daily basis. When we executed search warrants at their residence, we found a lot of firearms. Ballistics tests tied those firearms to drive-by shootings in New York City."

Welcome to Silver's world — a world he may not have entered without attending Columbia-Greene Community College.

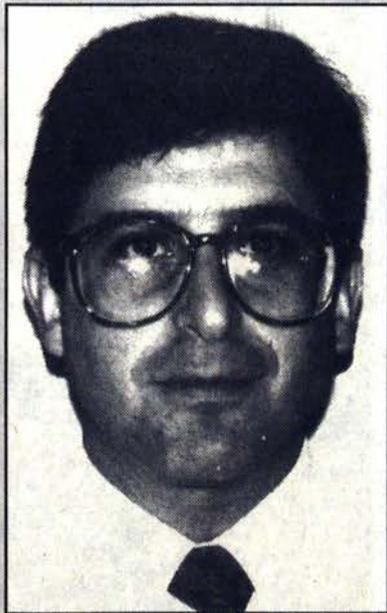
For over 10 years, Silver has served as assistant United States attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of New York, which encompasses the state's northeastern and central regions. He currently devotes himself to federal criminal prosecutions, including many drug cases.

Silver's interest in legal affairs goes back to his days at Columbia-Greene, where he earned an A.A. in criminal justice. At that point, he was aiming for a slightly different area of the law: "I wanted to be a cop," he said.

Roger Miner changed all that. The Columbia County district attorney at the time, Miner encountered Silver while teaching at Columbia-Greene. They kept in touch even while going their separate ways — Miner to a seat on the state Supreme Court, Silver to a B.A. from SUNY/Albany.

Upon Silver's SUNY graduation, Judge Miner called me to his chambers," Silver remembered, "and pretty much told me that he thought law school was what I should be doing. I accepted the advice."

That advice led him eventually to a clerkship with Miner himself, who had become a federal district judge. During that time, Silver began developing the inclinations that have shaped his career, most notably a preference for public ser-



Paul Silver

vice.

"Especially when you're a young lawyer, you have a much greater opportunity in public service to assume responsibility," he noted. "You're handed a file, and you're told, 'Take care of it,' which might even mean preparing for and going to trial. That's not something you'd be able to do at a large private firm."

Trial work, according to Silver, goes far beyond the standard fare of a TV courtroom drama.

"There's a lot of preparation that goes into the process before you actually get into the courtroom. You collaborate with investigators to gather evidence for a charge. You prepare for a grand jury indictment. You open up your case to the defense during the discovery process. You get your documents in order for the trial. All of your work is for naught if you go into trial unprepared."

Part of that preparation involves teaching witnesses about the courtroom process.

"Witnesses speak in terms of reality; what they need to do is turn that into reality in admissible form. Obviously we don't put words in

witnesses' mouths, but we need to tell them what they can and can't say in the courtroom, and how they can say it. All in all, it's a lot of work."

All that work frequently culminates in Silver's favorite venue: the courtroom itself.

"I like presenting the proof. I like establishing rapport with the jury. I enjoy making legal arguments when defense counsel objects to evidence. It's a constant thinking process: you can't let your guard down at all during the hours that you're in the courtroom. I suppose it's the intensity of the battle that's most enjoyable."

Many cases, of course, never get to trial because of plea bargaining, a procedure for which Silver makes no apologies. Indeed, he argues that plea bargaining serves both judicial efficiency and justice itself.

"If there were no plea bargains, the system would have a lot of difficulty continuing to function," he asserted. "But a criminal case is not altogether unlike any other type of litigation, in that there's usually a middle ground. A plea bargain helps find that middle ground: it allows everyone to walk away knowing that justice was served."

Outside the attorney's office, Silver has served with distinction in some of Columbia County's fire departments and rescue squads. The origins of his community work date back to his early days in the area.

"I came to Columbia County in 1971 and worked with my cousins in Hudson," he remembers. "One day there was a fire in the alleyway nearby; I was not in the fire department, but I was able to go out and help. It was enjoyable. That got me involved in the department, and eventually rescue services. Trial work has kept me away for a little while, but I'm looking forward to getting involved again. Everybody gives back to the community in a different way; this is how I do it."

This and helping to serve justice in federal courts. Both qualify Paul Silver as a significant contributor.