



“

I try my best to stay out of politics, which is only possible if you focus on the substance.”

Chris Giancarlo

Corporate Associate, 1985-89 (New York), 1988-91 (London)

As U.S. politics become increasingly tribal, Chris Giancarlo is a rare creature, having been nominated and unanimously confirmed to a political role by both Democrat and Republican Presidents.

Chris arrived at Curtis’ New York office in 1985. His choice of firm was to prove significant not just to his career, but to his life. He met his wife-to-be, Regina, at Curtis in the fall of 1985 where she was working as a night secretary to put herself through school, although they didn’t start dating until 1988. While summoning up the courage to propose in the fall of that year, he was asked by Albert Francke to move to the firm’s London office. “He wanted an answer right away,” chuckles Chris. “So I took all my courage and proposed, but with the caveat that I was committed to living in London for a few years.” Regina said yes to both marriage and what turned out to be a three-year European honeymoon.

Curtis London was a four-person outfit in the late '80s. Chris joined partners Mark Barth and Bruce Palmer, and another associate, Sarah Coombs. While in London, Chris started a program, “An Entrepreneur’s Guide to Doing Business in the U.S.,” and focused on startups, many of which were in the tech sector.

Once he moved back to the U.S., Chris and another attorney launched their own firm. They represented British emerging technology companies and grew rapidly to 14 lawyers in New York and Washington. He then merged the practice into a larger technology firm. “I had a very good experience and a great run there.” At the same time, Regina and Chris raised three

children, now in their early twenties: Emma, Luke and Henry.

“In 2000, one of the clients I had developed at Curtis, Fenics Software, was being sold to GFI Group, a Wall Street inter-dealer broker of OTC derivatives. Fenics had created an algorithm that was the benchmark tool for pricing currency options. I didn’t know the first thing about derivatives but I learned pretty fast, and in 2001 I joined GFI as Executive Vice President. In the next few years, GFI grew into the world’s largest trading platform for credit default swaps and other OTC derivatives.” Chris helped the firm to raise three rounds of private equity finance leading to its IPO in 2005.



“

I’ve been very fortunate in my career and in my life, and I fully intend to render some further public service and pay it forward now.”

It was wildly successful. GFI was one of the best performing financial service IPO in its first year. But troubled times were ahead. “By 2008 we had grown into 18 offices around the world and were turning almost a billion in revenue when the financial crisis hit. At that time, we operated the trading platforms on which most of the world’s credit default swaps were traded. GFI survived, but it was a challenge.” Now a key figure in the Fintech industry, Chris testified as an expert witness in various Congressional hearings on how swaps trading worked. It was a few years after he publicly endorsed the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act that he was first nominated by President Obama and unanimously confirmed to fill a Republican seat at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC). Later, President Trump re-nominated him to serve as the Chairman and he was again unanimously confirmed. His five-year term officially ended in April 2019, though he stayed on as Chairman until his successor was sworn in in July 2019. He explains, “I try my best to stay out of politics and it is only possible if you focus on the substance.”

Because derivatives markets are global in scope, so is the CFTC’s regulatory outlook.

“We were the first U.S. regulatory agency to create a Fintech regulatory incubator, LabCFTC, and we were the first and remain the only U.S. agency to enter into cooperation agreements with overseas regulators (with the Australian, UK and Singapore Fintech regulators).”

Five years is a long time anywhere, let alone

Washington. “I humbly declined to be put up for another term. I’ve been working pretty much constantly since my part-time job at 13, if you count summer jobs. Regina and I just celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary (with a big party in New York and some old Curtis friends in attendance) and I feel some time off is now in order.”

“I was at the firm when Eileen Matthews became a partner and remember the great celebration that followed.

Larry Goodman and I were contemporaries and he was a great friend and colleague. Geoffroy Lyonnet and his wife were also in

New York around the time that Regina and I were dating and we were great friends. I have such fond memories of John Marden, a great and fine lawyer and affable role model for what good and thorough lawyering is all about. Albert Francke was a wonderful mentor to me and nobody ran a deal better than Jerry Mulligan – I learned the dynamics of negotiating from him. Townsend Knight – a wonderful old school lawyer and, of course, John Campbell. My life would not have gone this way, or gone so satisfyingly, without those seven years at Curtis.”