

Lawyer happy to be tangled up in Dylan

TOM KLINE sits at his glossy dining-room table inside his Center City apartment and sips orange juice — that he just squeezed — out of a tall, flute-like glass. The table, set against a dizzying view of the city and adorned with a silver candelabra and glass vase filled with fresh white roses and pink tiger lilies, is heaped with books about Bob Dylan.

This is Tom Kline unmiked. The wiry and striking trial lawyer wears a gray fleece hoodie and baggy black pants, his feet clad in black socks. His toes open and curl, like the tail of a contented cat, as he sings one of Dylan's iconic ballads.

Come gather 'round people, wherever you roam, and admit that the waters around you have grown ... For the times they are a-changin'

Yesterday begins like most Sundays for Kline. He peruses the newspapers and watches ABC-TV's "This Week with Christiane Amanpour," while cupping a mug of hot tea. But on this sunny morning, he sequesters himself at his dining table and pores over case-law that references Dylan lyrics.

Kline is preparing for a Dylan-



CHILLIN' WIT' ...

TOM KLINE

Personal-injury lawyer

and-the-law seminar that he's hosting Friday with his playwright son, Zac, at the Wilma Theater. He excitedly pages through a stack of legal opinions, separated by black binder clips.

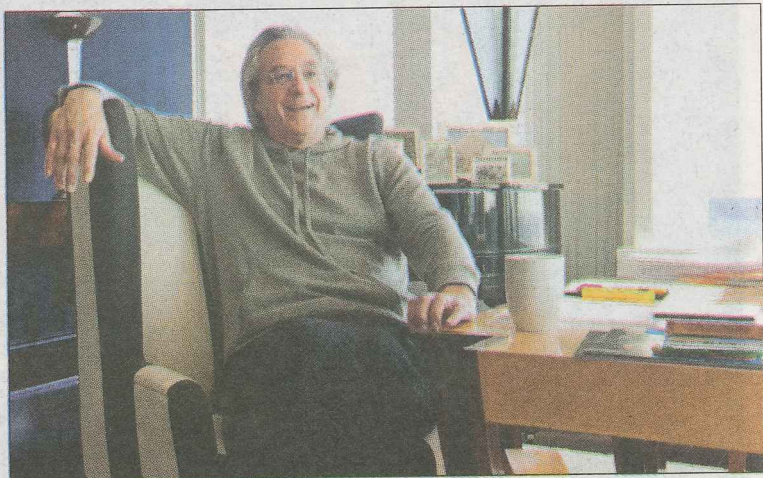
"Every one of these cases, from Massachusetts to California, cite 'Subterranean Homesick Blues,'" he says.

"Is that the name of a song?" asks a visitor — a reporter — who knows nothing about Dylan.

"Yes. Where the hell have you been? It's scary," Kline laughs. "'Get sick, get well, hang around the inkwell ... You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.'"

Kline, of Kline & Specter, talks about how lawyers, particularly trial lawyers, need to stay "fresh and vital and relevant and creative," and must be good storytellers. Like Dylan.

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From his high-rise pad, Tom Kline's just watching the river flow and revels in Bob Dylan and the law.

HILLARY PETROZZIELLO / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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"In his songs, Dylan raises questions about accountability and social responsibility, which are themes and concepts and ideas that I live and work with in my professional life every day."

Kline, among the nation's top trial lawyers, is perhaps best-known for winning a \$51 million jury award against SEPTA on behalf of a North Philly boy whose foot was torn off on a subway escalator.

"Every case has a potential to do a larger public good," Kline says. "I don't see the justice system in the harsh terms that Dylan as a writer in the 1960s saw the justice system."

The system, like human beings, has its frailties and imperfections, but judges are largely fair and just, and juries are "effective equalizers," he says.

Positively Broad Street

TOM KLINE and his playwright son, Zac Kline, are hosting a seminar on Bob Dylan and the law on Friday, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at the Wilma Theater.

The event includes a discussion on how Dylan's music relates to the justice system and will point out references to his lyrics in case law, including opinions written by U.S. Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Antonin Scalia. The program also will feature music by singer/songwriter Howard Fishman and his band and a guest appearance and signing by Seth Rogovoy, author of "Bob Dylan: Music-Mystic-Poet."

The event, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Association for Justice, is free and open to the public. For tickets and information, email Tom.Kline@KlineSpecter.com.

Kline recalls a case he tried a few years back on behalf of a dialysis patient who suffered massive brain damage and "a horrible death" as a result of a medical error. In his closing argument, he

quoted the Dylan song "Dignity."

"Dignity was the first to leave," he recites. ■

— Wendy Ruderman