ALBANY - Reporters covering the investiture of Circuit Judge Roger Miner Saturday got a bonus: a chance to interview Sen. Alfonse D'Amato.

Security was tight at the federal courthouse in downtown Albany. Those arriving had to show their invitations and a form of identification. They were then allowed upstairs where they passed through a metal detector; purses etc. went through another. They were also given cards pointing out the location of their seats.

At 10:45 a.m. - long before the noon investiture ceremony - the reporters were ushered into a jury room to meet with the Senator, who explained the significance of Judge Miner's appointment.

"It is the nation's second most important court, the Circuit Court of Appeals," the senator explained. "The Second Circuit traditionally has the most outstanding jurists. It is significant that someone from a small town has risen to that level. We're seeking out the best. You don't have to be a Wall St. attorney or a Harvard graduate. We need integrity, concern; this nation's affords opportunity to be the highest and best. This appointment may not be the highest spot for Roger Miner."

D'Amato noted that his committee selected him unanimously in recommending him to the President, "both for his initial appointment to the federal bench and to the second circuit. His record was such that Washington found a treasure. His appointment was moved with exceptional speed and alacrity. This is a real saga of America."

D'Amato said that "the judge has the temperament and scholastic ability ... he continues to win accolades."
The senator also said Miner might well wind up on the Supreme Court.

He also fielded questions about South Africa. "There are modest differences between the compromise and the president's plan," he said.

"Perceptions are important. It is important that this nation not be perceived as countenancing the degradation of peoplen, that's what apartheid is all about. I have voted for legislation with more stringent measures."

He also indicated in answer to another question that Supreme Court Judge Con Cholakas was being considered to replace Miner as a U.S. District Court Judge. "He is one whose name stands out," he said.

In answer to a question about the "satellite killer," D'Amato said the test "demonstrates to the Soviets that we have the capacity and the will to protect our nation's security. The Soviets are spending a great deal of money. For us to be prevented from doing the same thing would be a travesty."

He concluded by saying that Miner's investiture was "a great day for Albany and the whole north country."