

Remarks to be Read at the Special Session of the Court
In Memory of Judge Norma Levy Shapiro
June 15, 2017

I am very sorry that I am not able to be present this afternoon for the Special Session of this Court in memory of my dear friend and colleague, Norma Levy Shapiro.

At the time of her death last July, we had known each other for almost 50 years. She had started as an associate at Dechert Price & Rhoads in 1956 and left in 1958 to rear her three boys. She returned to Dechert in 1967, and it was at that time that I first met her as I had just arrived at the firm as a new associate.

In 1967, the firm had about 80 lawyers. She was a member of what was quaintly known as the Trial Team. The Team, which consisted of 23 lawyers, had a meeting every Friday morning in the large conference room in the firm's offices at Three Penn Center. The firm's cases, recent developments, court victories, and trial techniques were all topics of discussion. Norma Shapiro was not bashful in those meetings as the only woman surrounded by men, including such luminaries as Philip Price, Owen Rhoads, Francis DeLone, Hastings Griffin, and Robert Landis. I vividly remember that she impressed all of us with her insightful questions and thoughtful comments.

In due course, on July 2, 1973, she became the firm's first woman partner and one of the first, if not the first, among the larger firms in Philadelphia. I do not recall anyone making a big deal about this event as a giant step for women, which of course, it was. Norma Shapiro became a partner because she deserved it - plain and simple - and everyone recognized this fact.

Within five years - in 1978 - she was appointed to this Court. She was the first woman to sit on the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania in its then 189 year history. She would serve with distinction for the next 38 years.

I will leave it to others to review in detail her many achievements. She was a civil leader and a member of the Lower Merion School Board. She held high leadership positions in both the Philadelphia and American Bar Associations. She made many courageous decisions as a judge in the Philadelphia Prison and the Chester Housing cases, among others. Her efforts to promote gender equality and to help women in navigating their careers and homelives constituted a defining feature of who she was.

There was another important dimension to Norma Shapiro that must be emphasized. She was first and foremost devoted to her beloved husband Bernie and to their children, Aaron, Finley

and Neal. And then, of course, there were her daughters-in-law and her grandchildren who were very special to her.

In addition to her amazing accomplishments and her love of her family, I think of her primarily as a caring friend not only to me but to countless others, including the members of this Court. She was always available to provide wise counsel. For 38 years she remembered the birthdays of each of her judicial colleagues with a cake and a song. Because of the quantity of cakes she purchased over the decades, the bakeries in the area were very happy to see her cross their thresholds.

Every Valentine's Day, we all found a piece of chocolate candy in the shape of a heart in our internal mailboxes at the courthouse. While there was never a note identifying the donor, there was no real mystery as to where the chocolate came from.

I was very fortunate to have had her as a friend, a law partner, and a judicial colleague for so many years. I miss her greatly. If judges wore numbers on their robes the way baseball players wear numbers on their uniforms, Norma Shapiro's number would now be retired.

Harvey Bartle III