

6/4/17

MEMORIAL REMARKS FOR JUDGE SHAPIRO

It is an honor to have been asked to speak today for a few minutes about the judge for whom I had the privilege and joy to clerk.

I clerked for Judge Shapiro in 1985. It was her 7<sup>th</sup> year on the bench.

I remember the first summary judgment opinion she asked me to draft. I looked at the names of the well-known lawyers who wrote the opposing briefs. I felt a little nauseous. And, by a little, I mean a lot.

We talked about the draft opinion. It did not feel like a judge imparting wisdom, even though that is exactly what it was.

It felt like a Talmudic discussion where I had the opportunity to observe a mind work like none I ever had seen before, or frankly, since.

Here's the bottom line: she saw what both parties—and I—had missed. The judge had a brilliant, agile and questioning mind. She was determined to do justice and justice she did.

As we all know, Judge Shapiro was a role model and mentor for so many women. But I want to say, as a man, she was also a role model and mentor for me, too. How lucky I am, as a man, for my first mentor to have been such a remarkable woman.

I admired not only the Judge's mind but also her ethics. As we all know, the Judge faced less than civil attacks in a highly-publicized case involving prison over-crowding.

The Judge's dedication to the rule of law remained unwavering; her dignity, inspiring.

Of course, nothing was more important to the Judge than her true family. I clerked for her the year she lost her mom. During that year, between court matters, the Judge often went to visit her.

I went with the Judge and drove her blue station wagon. If you knew the judge, you will understand it was not an act of kindness that I had offered to drive. I simply wanted to survive. I know her grandchildren can relate.

During our time together, we talked not only about cases but also about life. I cherish those moments and often replay those conversations.

But it was not all serious. I share with you but one story.

One day, after my vacation, I arrived at work with a beard. Everyone in chambers looked horrified. I was not sure why.

Then, the Judge told me how many criminals had beards. She followed up with: "Of course, I am not telling you what to do." Of course not!

Well, one day I was driving the Judge to see her mom. There were no cell phones back then, but, when we returned to chambers, she told me a marshall had called her to make sure she was okay.

She reported that he was concerned because she was being driven by some “unknown bearded man.” Those words I recall exactly.

At lunch, I shaved my beard. And, then the judge said: “Oh, you decided to shave your beard” as if it were a non-issue. I laughed and she smiled wide.

We worked very hard. But we also had a lot of fun. I loved her wry sense of humor and the fact that to work with her was also to laugh with her.

My relationship with the judge did not end with my clerkship. I think I can speak for all of her law clerks in saying she remained a lifelong source of wisdom, encouragement and friendship.

And, the warmth of the Judge’s embrace extended to other members of her judicial family: Madge Ward and Jackie Gallagher. The Judge cared for them as much as they cared for her.

I remember my last conversation with the Judge. I was struggling with an issue and called her for advice.

During that call, one of her grandchildren called so she told me she had to call me back and got off the phone immediately. About an hour later, she called me back. I think that says it all.

Yes, it was special to be part of her judicial family. But her real family--Bernie, her 3 sons (Finley, Aaron and Neil), her Fran and her 7 grandchildren—they were the center of her life. How gracious they all have been to share this special woman with all of us.

It is a better world because of Judge Norma Shapiro. How blessed I feel to have been part of her world.