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Remarks at Memorial Service for Beth Mobley

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**REMARKS AT MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR BETH MOBLEY
TOURO LAW SCHOOL, FEBRUARY 12, 2018**

*Jeffrey B. Morris**

My relationship with Beth was almost entirely professional. It was, however, friendly, warm and, I believe, marked by mutual admiration.

For over three decades, Beth responded to calls for assistance (sometimes desperate) connected with books and articles I was writing, as well as information I needed for teaching and other matters. Beth knew better than anyone else around Touro just how much I did not know. What would take me an hour, if I was lucky enough to be able to do it, took ten or fifteen minutes when I sought Beth's assistance. I was comfortable enough to be able to tell her that I knew nothing or almost nothing about the sources in a given area. She accepted such a statement without accusing me of false modesty and always knew what to do to overcome my ignorance.

I relied upon Beth to ascertain whether there were oral histories of obscure federal judges, then to find them and borrow them for me. I bothered her with requests for information on obscure changes of jurisdiction in the history of the judiciary of the District of Columbia. She unearthed for me histories of various law schools and bar associations. She found materials I used for a children's book on Harry Truman. I called upon her expertise to guide me to the Nineteenth Century conditions of life in the Dakotas, Nebraska and Iowa (among other states in the Eighth Circuit). Locating aspects of the work of the multifaceted career of Judge Jack B. Weinstein put both Beth and me to the test.

I enjoyed greatly my talks with Beth -- about books, the state of things in the library and much else. I admired the exhibitions she curated with such loving energy. We collaborated on one project we greatly enjoyed working on, which facilitated the gift of a large

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collection of books on trials and judges that had belonged to a sterling student I had at The City College, Tamar Benamy. Tami (1937-97) had left me the choice of books in this valuable collection. I simply did not have the room for them. Rather than have the collection sold off, at the request of her family, our then Law Librarian, Dan Jordan, found a place for Tami's collection at Touro.

It was Beth who lovingly integrated the Benamy books into our collection, became fascinated with Tami's prolific correspondence and joined me in hosting Tami's ninety-year-old mother, coaxing the Dean to have a tea to honor the gift and the mother, Avivah Benamy.

Alas, there were projects Beth and I talked about that I never had the time to do, especially employing for serious scholarship the papers of Judges Jacob Fuchsberg and Frank Altimari in the possession of the law school. Nor did we ever talk through what remains a serious issue for me, what to do with the massive materials gathered while working on the book about Judge Jack Weinstein.

For me, Beth was a rock. She reminded me of the capstone story of Kathryn Forbes's novel, *Mama Bank Account*. Mama was a Norwegian immigrant, struggling to bring up a family in San Francisco. The family had little, if any, money, but when one of the children really needed something, Mama would always say that, if the family did not have the money at hand or could not figure out a legitimate way to get it, she would take it from "Mama's Bank Account." However, somehow the money was always found without breaking into the account. At the end of the novel, one of her grown daughters, now an author, received her first check from selling a story. She brought it to Mama and asked her to put it into "Mama's Bank Account."

Flustered, Mama stammered before finally admitting, there "[i]s no bank account." In my relationship with Beth, that thoughtful, kind, precise and learned person, I always knew when I had a real research problem plaguing me that I could go to Beth. The difference from the novel was that just a few hundred feet away was my bank account and it was real!