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Ilene Barshay: A Beloved Friend and Colleague

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ILENE BARSHAY: A BELOVED FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE

Rena C. Seplowitz

It is fitting that the Law Review has chosen to dedicate this issue, which includes many student Notes, to Ilene Barshay who, as a devoted member of this journal, played a critical role in its success. First my student and then my colleague, Ilene became one of my closest friends. I treasure her memory, continue to hear her voice and value her influence.

I first met Ilene when she was a student in my Trusts and Estates class thirty years ago. To say that she was an exceptional student is an understatement. Her intellectual curiosity, critical approach and meticulous preparation not only engaged the class but also led to a continuation of our discussions in my office. We had a shared enthusiasm—she, as a returning student to prepare for her new career and I, as a relatively recent law professor who had left law practice. Balancing her family life, coping with illness which she fortunately overcame, Ilene never complained but spoke about her vision of using her legal skills to assist the less fortunate. An aspect of estates law that she and I valued was helping clients think about the consequences of mortality and grapple with personal loss while engaging in frequently sophisticated planning. After the end of the semester, Ilene and I continued to speak frequently about her work on the Law Review and her career choices which included academia. As an advisor to the Law Review, I was once again impressed with Ilene’s insight, intelligence, writing, commitment and interaction with other students. Older than many members of her class, she treated everyone with respect and reached out to help others who had more difficulty grasping the finer legal nuances or who were experiencing personal challenges. Ilene displayed these traits throughout her life.

After Ilene graduated, our friendship continued and I was delighted when Ilene joined the faculty as a Legal Methods professor. A combination of a nurturing approach and high standards enabled her students to improve their analytical and writing skills. Focusing on

each student as an individual, she honed in on their specific needs, advocated for them when necessary and earned their adulation. In addition to the profound influence she had on her students while they were at Touro, she actively assisted them in securing employment and followed their legal careers long after they graduated. It is not surprising that several of her former students wrote moving tributes dedicated to her memory and so many attended her funeral.

Ilene's intellectual interests led her to enroll in N.Y.U.'s LL.M. program while she was teaching. The energy that my friend and colleague, Heather Melniker, aptly described propelled her to earn her advanced degree. In the course of her studies, she wrote a paper which she developed into an article, *The Implications of the Constitution's Religion Clause on New York Family Law*, which she published in the Howard Law Journal. Ilene asked me to review several drafts of the article and we spent many hours discussing her critical analysis of New York's Get law. Once again, Ilene's incisive mind resulted in hours of stimulating discussion. Although Ilene was very proud of her accomplishments, her modesty led her to speak about them privately.

Deeply committed to public service, Ilene believed that her legal training could be beneficial to the Coalition against Domestic Violence and her synagogue, among other organizations and institutions. Her commitment, energy and fund-raising abilities played an invaluable role in their success and growth. For each project that Ilene took on, her meticulous planning and persuasiveness ensured the success of her efforts.

I admired Ilene for her devotion to her family who adored her. When we met for lunch or dinner, played tennis or spoke on the phone invariably, I would hear about their accomplishments and her concerns. Her love for her husband, Stan, their children and their spouses and their grandchildren grounded her and gave her the confidence to achieve her aspirations. Stan became a good friend as well and I always smiled when he spoke of her accomplishments. The commitment that Ilene as well as Stan showed to their friends was legendary and they worked ceaselessly to find a way to help. Ilene was never too busy to listen, advise and try to make life better. I lost a unique friend, but her impact on my life and my career remain.