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SHE DRESSED TO THE NINES AND KNEW “HOW TO WRITE GOOD”

Han Sheng Beh and Alice Jakyung Choi

We could never bring ourselves to call Ilene Barshay, Ilene. Instead, she was always Professor Barshay to us. From the day we stepped into her classroom in 2006, until the last time we saw her, on our wedding day, Professor Barshay never stopped teaching. Besides the obvious academic education she provided to us in our legal writing class (best encapsulated with her advice to “write tight”), Professor Barshay, among a myriad of other success stories, nurtured these two international students into successful lawyers. In a nutshell, we owe a large part of our academic and professional success to this amazing person, this unstoppable force sitting behind a warm smile and perfectly manicured appearance.

Anyone who has had the pleasure of meeting Professor Barshay knows that she was always the best dressed and most put together person in every room she walked into. Her fashion sense and style provided a glimpse into Professor Barshay’s essence and her attitude towards all aspects of her life. Every little detail was meticulously analyzed, consciously coordinated and elegantly approached. Every loose end was tied up, and if anything was to ever fall out of place, she always had a contingency plan. This drive for perfection was evident in her teaching and we, the students, received the benefits of her lessons that extended well beyond the corners of her classrooms. Professor Barshay’s active involvement in the Theodore Roosevelt American Inns of Court gave us our first introduction to lawyers, judges and others in the legal profession, and she played a key role in securing our first positions as aspiring attorneys. What was most impressive was her exceptional ability to amplify the strengths of her students, who came from all different backgrounds and pedigrees, in order shape these students’ careers. Without a doubt, Professor Barshay’s tireless work with her students has lit the path to success for them. We are living examples of the fruits of her labor.

Professor Barshay always saw everything to the end and getting her students prestigious positions in well regarded firms was simply not enough. Over the years, well after we were sworn in as officers of the court, she continued to mentor us as we rose from first-year associates to senior associate and partner. Professor Barshay was our Sherpa, guiding us through our winding and sometimes slippery career paths. She never stopped giving us the advice and support we needed over the countless telephone calls and lunches/dinners with her. Professor Barshay always had a way of finding a door when all roads seem to dead end, and we looked to her for help on many occasions.

Beyond the professional aspects, we are simply lucky to call Professor Barshay not only our mentor, but our friend. She has impacted our lives deeply and the words of praise we sing today seem small in light of what she has actually done for us. Imagine first stepping foot in the United States one month before the first day of law school. Now imagine the anxiety of being the first in your family to attempt to become a lawyer, in a new country where the primary language was not your own. We were fortunate enough to find an individual who not only erased the worries of academia, but who also served as a true friend who challenged us to be more like her—a person who not only persevered to improve herself on a daily basis but who also helped everyone around her. Aside from the sage and meaningful advice, we will certainly remember fondly the everyday correspondence and conversations regarding family, current events, places to visit, and, of course fashion.

Professor Barshay, Ilene, we are forever in your debt and will always miss you.