



Harold D. Shapiro 1927 - 2005

Lawyer called many people friend

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The impact Harold D. Shapiro had on those in his life, from clients to restaurant cooks and former law school students, has become evident to family and friends as they check their e-mails and answer their telephones.

"Harold was exemplified by what has happened since his death," said Duane C. Quaini, his close friend and chairman of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP, the law firm where Mr. Shapiro had practiced law for more than 53 years, the last 47 as a partner.

"I have literally received hundreds of messages of condolence and it has taken me days to respond to the e-mails, voice mails, and phone calls from around the world. Harold's network of friends--and they were friends--was the largest I have ever seen, by far. The touching notes and comments since he died tell me that he penetrated their lives even if they only knew him briefly.

"He was a brilliant man in the true sense of the word, but what set him apart was his giving of himself to others. If anybody approached him no matter their station in life or their situation and asked for some of him--his time or his thoughts--Harold gave it with humor, grace and willingness."

Mr. Shapiro, 78, of Wilmette, who also lectured and taught at Northwestern University School of Law for more than four decades, died of a ruptured aorta, Thursday, Dec. 1, in St. Francis Hospital in Evanston.

He served as the law firm's first chairman from 1985-99 and led its growth as it added offices across the country. For more than 50 years, Mr. Shapiro represented Allstate Corp., the insurance company founded by Sears, Roebuck and Co., which was spun off to shareholders in the late 1990s.

"Harold was a wonderful man from many different standpoints," said Edward Brennan, Sears' chief executive officer from 1985-95. "He was a man who thoroughly enjoyed life. He also was a

very competent corporate lawyer. He did a lot of work for me, such as when we did our initial public offering of Allstate in the early 1990s and when we sold the Sears Tower [in 1997], he was the outside corporate lawyer on that project."

Born and raised on Chicago's West Side, Mr. Shapiro enlisted in the Navy in 1944 during World War II, serving with the Seabees on Samar in the Philippines. After the war, he became a baker for the Seabees and served four years as a reservist before being discharged in 1950.

He then received a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University, followed by a law degree from its School of Law. Among his law school classmates was Dawn Clark Netsch, a former Democratic state senator and state comptroller, whose campaigns he supported.

"We were extremely close friends," Netsch said. "We always had a spirited irreverent relationship. We could insult each other in great good spirit. We were the class of 1952, and we always said we were the best class ever. We all remained very close with real comradeship and friendship. Harold was bright and alive and just interested in lots of things and was just marvelous toward people, which is one reason why so many people are going to miss him so much."

Mr. Shapiro's experience at Northwestern piqued an interest in teaching, and he became part of the law school faculty in 1959, seven years after joining the law firm. In 1971, he was named the Senior Edward A. Harriman Adjunct Professor of Law. One of the last things he did on the day he died was dictate the final examination for the conflicts class he taught at the school.

An avid sportsman, Mr. Shapiro played golf regularly at the Lake Shore Club, and basketball three times a week at the Standard Club, perfecting his jump shot while in his 60s, and playing as recently as the day before he died. He also enjoyed reading English murder mysteries and books about World War II.

"He was the kind of person you could always talk to," said his son, Matthew, "the kind of person you loved, but also liked. You just greatly enjoyed talking to him. He was very much at the top of his game. My sister and I lived in the house with him, and we were constantly discussing the events of our lives, of our day, with him, looking to him for advice, for conversation."

Other survivors include his wife of 55 years, Beatrice; a daughter, Michal Ann; another son, Nicholas; a sister, Barbara Friedman Schmetterer; and three grandchildren.