

Judge Sandra Silver

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It was with much sadness that we received the news on April 4th that Judge Sandra Silver had passed away. I immediately thought of the first time that I met Judge Silver when she was an active Public Administrator for the Probate Court in the early 1980s. I can still picture her walking quickly through the back halls of the Probate Court, carrying a briefcase as well as a hand full of probate files she had up for court that morning. She always had a story to tell and a larger-than-life smile on her face. I recall a particular occasion where she had been appointed to serve as guardian for both a mother and a daughter. It was a difficult case for the family and I recall the hours she spent to arrange for both mother and daughter to attend a family wedding out of the county. This wasn't her responsibility as guardian, but it was important to this family. This was just the sort of thing she did. These were people who had little in the way of assets but that didn't matter to her.

The Honorable Eugene Arthur Moore, Chief Judge of the Probate Court, mirrored this sentiment when he said, "Judge Silver was a wonderful judge and a great friend to the 'little people.' She will be greatly missed."

Judge Silver attended the University of Michigan for her undergraduate work and the Detroit College of Law for her Juris Doctorate. In June 1988, Judge Silver was appointed by Governor James Blanchard to the Oakland County Probate Court bench. Prior to that time, she had served as Oakland County Public Administrator for 10 years as well as serving as a labor arbitrator.

Judge Silver served on the State Officers Compensation Committee and as an investigator and member of the Discipline Panel for the Attorney Grievance Commission. She was a trustee for the North Oakland YWCA and was on the board of directors of The Orchards. Judge Silver served as a director of the Children's Charter for the Courts of Michigan and was a longtime member of the Women Lawyers Association as well as a member of the National Association of Women Judges.

During Judge Silver's tenure on the bench, she was a member of the Probate and Mental Health committees of the Michigan Probate Judges Association and was honored by the Salvation Army and HAVEN for her dedication and commitment to community issues.

Those of us who worked with Judge Silver over the years soon learned that her level of commitment to the people she served as a Public Administrator carried over to the cases she heard as a judge. She had a reputation as a very dedicated and hard-working judge who allowed people the opportunity to be heard and who carried out her judicial duties in a kind and compassionate manner.

A longtime friend and colleague, Judge Barry Grant, called her "a judges' judge. She knew the law; was very dedicated to her work; was decisive, compassionate, and treated people with respect and dignity."

During her tenure as a probate judge, she saw many high-profile and difficult cases. She often had to make difficult decisions regarding the termination of parental rights, removing juveniles from their homes, sentencing juveniles to detention facilities and dealing with the oftentimes very disturbed mental health patients. Perhaps it was because of these difficult types of matters that she found such joy in the adoption finalization hearings. Walking by her chambers conference room one day, I noticed the room was somewhat in disarray. There were cups, plates, napkins and crumbs all over the room. When I asked the clerk what had happened, the clerk simply said, "Oh, this was adoption day and the judge always has treats for the new families."

From the first time I met her, telling stories about all the people she was taking care of, until that day walking past her conference room, it was clear that Judge Silver should serve as an inspiration to all of us for the value she placed on each and every person whom she ever helped during her life.

Stay tuned!