



## Fred Shapiro

July 5, 1949 - November 18, 2022

Fred L. Shapiro, a highly respected, charismatic retired judge and beloved professor of law died peacefully in St. Petersburg, Florida on November 18, 2023, at the age of 73. He succumbed to metastatic cancer of the small intestine, with his beloved wife, Susan Ecker, by his side. In addition to his wife Susan, he is survived by his two sons, Roger (Elyse) Shapiro and Brian (Sara) Shapiro, grandchildren Luke, Alexandra, and Benjamin, sister Ilene Shapiro, stepson David (Jessica) Ecker, step grandson Caleb, and stepdaughter Melody Ecker.

Fred was born in Brooklyn, New York on July 5th, 1949. He proudly graduated from the prestigious Brooklyn Tech High School and went on to earn his BA from the City College of New York (cum laude) in June 1971. Although he once contemplated becoming an engineer, Fred ultimately decided to pursue a law degree. He worked at a local gas station owned by his father-in-law, while simultaneously attending St. John's University School of Law full time, to help support his first wife Sondra (Fane) Shapiro, who preceded him in death, and their two sons. Despite a variety of personal obstacles, Fred completed his legal studies in three years and was on the Dean's list each semester of law school. He earned his Juris Doctor degree from St. John's Law School in June 1974.

After graduating from law school, Fred became a law assistant to the Justices

of the Appellate Term, Second Department, in October 1974. Thus began a career in the public sector that continued more than 30 years and should serve as a model for how every person employed by a government entity should conduct him/herself. Because of his brilliant legal scholarship, and a work ethic second to none, Fred quickly gained the confidence of the Appellate Term Justices and his nonjudicial supervisors. He was assigned a greater number of the more complex cases pending before the court and his production was prolific.

In March, 1981, Fred was asked to accept a temporary assignment as the personal law clerk for the Honorable Joseph F. Gagliardi, Administrative Judge of the courts in the five suburban counties just north of New York City constituting the Ninth Judicial District of New York. Like the Justices in the Appellate Term, Justice Gagliardi was immediately impressed by Fred's brilliant legal mind and his other diverse talents. Fred was asked to stay on as Justice Gagliardi's permanent law clerk, an offer he gladly accepted. Fred was given responsibility for a variety of complex assignments in addition to the typical legal work of a law clerk. Fred became Justice Gagliardi's most trusted advisor on all matters pertaining to the courts of the Ninth District, legal and administrative.

Once he became a permanent member of Justice Gagliardi's staff, Fred and his family moved from Brooklyn to Northern Westchester County. His magnetic personality and innovative ideas changed the culture within the courts and improved relations with the local attorneys. He was instrumental in adopting new rules and procedures to improve case management and make the courts more responsive to the needs of the local attorneys and their clients.

Fred personally mediated some of the most problematic civil matters and developed special expertise in resolving high conflict divorce litigation. He also

became a vital source of support for his fellow law clerks throughout the Ninth Judicial District. Fred set up biannual dinners and invited all active law clerks, as well as all retired law clerks, to socialize and share common areas of concern. He was a reliable and most generous source of support for any fellow law clerk facing a personal crisis of any sort. He also spent countless hours after work, on the phone or in person, offering guidance to any local attorney or any litigant, especially self-represented individuals, in crisis.

Fred finally received the public recognition he deserved in 1994 when he was awarded the prestigious Joseph F. Gagliardi Award for Excellence. The award had been created in memory of Fred's mentor, Justice Gagliardi, who retired from the Bench in 1987. After his mentor retired, Fred was asked to remain on the staff of the Administrative Judge who succeeded Justice Gagliardi. He continued to serve the courts as a valued advisor, and Chief Law Assistant for the Ninth District, until January, 1995, when he began a ten-year term as a duly elected Westchester County Court Judge.

Fred was frequently asked to present continuing legal education programs on behalf of the Office of Court Administration and a variety of local bar associations. He discovered that he had a passion for teaching and became an adjunct professor of law at nearby Pace University School of Law (now known as the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University).

Fred taught several courses at Pace Law School from June 1987 through June 2002. He received outstanding evaluations from both his students and the full-time faculty. He became a mentor and advisor for hundreds, if not thousands, of students. He also spearheaded and expanded a summer intern program to allow law students to work with judges and law clerks throughout the district. Many of Fred's former law students have expressed their gratitude for the quality of the substantive law he taught them and his tireless efforts to

help them find jobs working both in the courts and in the public sector.

During his tenure on the Bench, Fred was an exceptionally effective and productive case manager. His strong work ethic and brilliant legal scholarship were put to good use. He was especially adept at quickly grasping the core issue or issues in dispute and devising creative ways to resolve those issues. Although laser focused on resolving matters as expeditiously as possible, he remained true to the rule of law and the dictates of due process owing to every litigant.

Fred was acutely sensitive to the needs of children in high conflict family law cases assigned to him. He routinely assigned experienced attorneys to represent the children's interest any time there was a dispute involving their interests. A desire to mitigate harm to the children as much as possible was always his priority.

Compassion for all litigants and his co-workers in the courts, respect for the attorneys who appeared in the litigations before him, a strong conscientious work ethic and an infectious sense of humor are all hallmarks of Fred's more than 30 years of service working in the courts.

Fred retired from the Bench at the end of his ten-year term. He subsequently was of counsel to a private firm that specialized in divorce litigation, and he was a highly successful mediator for a period of years. Fred served as a Board member of Temple Beth Sholom in Flushing, NY and enjoyed delivering an annual program on the afternoon of Yom Kippur. He retired in 2016 to spend more time and pursue other interests with Susan, his wife and soulmate, and to spend their winters in Florida. The two met in 2009 and married in August 2015. They traveled abroad often, made many new friends along their journeys, enjoyed many adventures and had plans for many more when Fred was stricken by the devastating illness that claimed his life at far

too young an age. His legacy of kindness, generosity and good humor will never be forgotten by those who had the privilege of knowing him.

Cremation will take place in St. Petersburg, Florida. A memorial service will be held in May 2023 at Temple Beth Shalom and on Zoom. If anyone would like to receive notification of the memorial service, kindly send an email request to Susan Ecker at [NYCSoozi@aol.com](mailto:NYCSoozi@aol.com).

Donations may be made to Masbia of Queens or Food Bank for New York City.

# Tribute Wall

SS

“ We met Fred and Susie on a Jewish Heritage tour of Europe. What a lovely man Fred was! It was an honor to know him.  
Baruch Dayan HaEmet. Shelley and Larry Stein



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**shelley Stein** - November 21, 2022 at 09:00 PM

DS

“ Doreen and I had the pleasure of meeting Fred multiple times. As good friends of Lisa and Jay Woliner, there were many social events where Fred and his wife Susie attended.



*Sincere condolences and May his memory be for a blessing.  
Doreen and David Schwartz*

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**David Schwartz** - November 21, 2022 at 07:03 PM



“ Terri Breslau-Ravit lit a candle in memory of Fred Shapiro



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**Terri Breslau-Ravit** - November 21, 2022 at 06:12 PM

LW

“ *Lisa Woliner lit a candle in memory of Fred Shapiro*



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**lisa woliner** - November 21, 2022 at 05:34 PM

LW

“ *In 2009, my husband Jay and I had the honor of meeting Fred. He started dating my sister-in-law Susie and she would call us up and tell us about this incredible guy she met, what a great sense of humor, very kind and intelligent. She talked about him all the time when we finally said “ok, when do we meet him.” It wasn’t long after that that we met.*

*Susie was right, he was everything she said...soon afterwards we would spend lots of weekends together, seeing shows, playing games and so much laughter and just enjoying life. We even had Fred officiate our 40th wedding renewal (he put on his judges cap) and performed a beautiful ceremony. Soon after he reprised his role and officiated at my older sons wedding and then just three years he again officiated at my younger sons wedding.*

*His favorite dessert was anything chocolate and I always made a point of having eclairs when he was around.*

*Fred, made an Impact on not only our lives, but especially for the love he had for Susie - she was his princess and he was her Prince Charming (a true Cinderella fairytale). There’s no more to say, because the tears are flowing now and I will stop. Fred, I’ll see you in my dreams....Love Lisa*

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**lisa woliner** - November 21, 2022 at 05:30 PM

JW

*Fred was a wonderful brother-in-law. I considered him a brother. Throughout the years we took many trips together, shared a lot of laughs, and exchanged many war stories (from his time in the bench and my time in Wall Street regulation). He would always remind me with his broad smile, and Brooklynese accent, that the difference between our fields was that he had the last word. How could I disagree? enjoyed our trips, and the occasions that we got together. His oratory was beautiful. He officiated at our two son's weddings, and also officiated, when Lis and I renewed our vows. He was generous, had a great sense of humor, and mastered the art of storytelling. He will be very missed. We are all diminished by his passing. We are glad he is not in pain anymore. There is, I believe, a special place waiting for him. May he be at peace, and his memory be for a blessing,*

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**Jay Woliner** - November 21, 2022 at 06:56 PM

KS

*I'm so sorry to hear about Fred. I knew him long long time ago when he lived in Somers. His first wife was my best friend. He was so funny. We constantly bantered back and forth.....His laugh was endearing. I am so sorry for his sons who have lost a great dad. My best to his wife.*

*Kathy Sica*

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**Kathy Sica** - November 24, 2023 at 12:11 AM