

## **MIKE SHEFFIELD, 1949-2011**

Good Morning.

We are here to celebrate the life of Michael Sheffield.

My name is Margaret Washburn. Mike Sheffield and I shared office space for over ten years in Lawrenceville. Our intercom system was to leave our office doors open and talk to each other across the hall. I truly enjoyed his company and his funny voice.

I am supposed to talk for just a few minutes, but any of the judges and lawyers here know that won't happen.

Mike had an enthusiastic love for the law. He has a reputation among his peers for being ethical, professional and dedicated. He is a former assistant district attorney and county public defender. He set up his own law practice in Lawrenceville after years of public service. Criminal defense is a tough area of the law and Mike was uniquely qualified to handle it.

Mike was Masterful in his ability to talk to people and in his ability to just sit and listen. I was impressed by the way that he could talk to a Supreme Court Justice or a Gwinnett county jail inmate and treat both with same courtesy, consideration and dignity.

He was a local Icon; someone for younger lawyers to look up to. Mike was a former State Bar of Georgia Board of Governors member, a past Gwinnett County Bar Association President, a past president of the DeKalb County Bar Association and someone who delighted in participating in the GA High School Mock Trial program.

Community service and service to his fellow lawyers were important to him, including stepping up to run for statewide judicial office when he believed there was a need for him to do so. He ran two tough state-wide elections and did not win; but showed an amazing work ethic in the process.

I was Mike's newsletter Editor when he was President of the Gwinnett County Bar Association in 2004. During Mike's term as President of the Gwinnett Bar Association, we saw many changes come about in our Gwinnett judicial community and in our judiciary. In his first President's Corner, he wrote about how excited he was to serve as President, and thanked many of the members for their past and upcoming work for the GCBA.

He thanked Jorgia Northrup for her Law Day efforts and Judge Warren Davis and myself for our internet and hard copy Newsletters. He spoke of the Law Enforcement Appreciation Day picnic and thanked Julie Potts for her hard work. He spoke of Judge Billy Ray who was putting the new Drug Court together.

Mike congratulated Judge Ronnie Batchelor who was moving from the Magistrate Court to Superior Court Judge of Gwinnett County, while reminding us that we would miss Judge Fred Bishop, Judge Gene Reeves and Judge Howard Cook, who were retiring from full time judicial service.

Mike wrote of his statewide campaigns on several occasions and thanked everyone that tried to make his dream of becoming an appellate Judge come true, for their hard work and their belief in him.

The year that Mike was President, the County broke ground on the new building that became the Records Court/Juvenile Court facility. The Detention Center added two new magistrate courtrooms. The year that Mike was President, Judge George Hutchinson was appointed to a full time Magistrate position, as was Judge Laura Tate. Three more magistrates, all women, including Jan Moja, Angela Duncan and Michelle Knight, were added to the bench by Judge Davis. We saw the passing of Judge Bill Coolidge, Suwanee.

Mike met with several planning committees in his capacity as President. He hoped the extra courtrooms and new facility would help with the parking at the main courthouse. It didn't. He talked to then state rep Phyllis Miller, Sen. Curt Thompson and Com'n Chair Charles Bannister about how we could continue to improve our judicial community and our facilities.

We had terrific luncheons that year, including recognizing Judges of the Month, old judges, new judges, retired judges, city judges. He even invited Court of Appeals Judge Debra Bernes, who had defeated him in the Court of Appeals race in 2004, to be a speaker at our May luncheon.

Mike was gracious, even in defeat.

As President, Mike assisted the Gwinnett Regional Georgia Mock Trial program in finding judges, evaluators and coaches, but made sure to publicly thank coordinator Don Swift from Anderson Tate and Carr for his hard work with the program. Mike participated for many years, including serving as an evaluator just two weeks ago in the Gwinnett Regional mock trial competition.

Mike's June, 2005 President Corner was his last and, as usual, he spoke of everyone and everything but himself. He spoke of Angela Nguyen, Carole Korn, Kathy Schrader, Pat O'Kelley, Bob Marshall, Judge Debra Turner, Judge Randy Rich, Jennifer Clark, Melanie Williams, Debra Hale and Michael Marr.

He took no credit for all of the great things that were accomplished during his term, but he deserved much of the credit. That he had such good lawyers serving on his committees was a tribute to Mike Sheffield.

Mike was very active in all of the GCBA programs during his term as President. We won the State Bar award for Best Law Day program that year, Best Newsletter and Award of Merit. And Mike deserved those awards for his leadership.

Or, it could have been the great scrap book that Susan Sheffield put together for Mike's presentation for the State Bar annual awards.

It was a busy year with so many things going on in our Bar Association and in our local community of lawyers. Any of us could have been elected President to preside over such a busy year. But it was Mike Sheffield that we voted in as President that year. It is his calm leadership that we remember today.

Mike was one of the Kindest persons whom you could ever hope to meet. Mike took time to stop in the courthouse hall way and chat. He would offer the younger lawyers on the appointed Criminal Indigent Defense list some very sage advice.

Mike was Entertaining, too. He had a sly sense of humor. When we were sitting in the office, and I was begging him to please write his President's corner, he would crack jokes and make the worst puns, and often it was the next day before I realized that he was usually laughing at me.

**Masterful; Iconic, Kind, Entertaining. That spells MIKE, doesn't it?**

We have lost an exceptional and important member of our legal community, and our good friend. We were so blessed to have Mike in our lives. Thank you Susan, Olivia and Matthew for sharing Mike with us, for even such a brief time. I am honored to have been a part of this service today. Thank you.