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# Memorial for Chief Judge Anne Simonett

James B. Loken

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## Honorable James B. Loken†

I came to know Anne Simonett in the fall of 1981 when she joined Faegre & Benson fresh out of Harvard Law School. Shortly after she arrived, I was asked to go to Chicago on short notice for a brief trial, and I asked Anne to come along and help. Some of our client's employees had quit and were attempting to lure customers to their new employer despite the fact that they had promised not to do that in their employment contracts. We were asking the Court to enforce those promises—a difficult and emotional kind of business dispute. I remember I was amazed at how much Anne contributed; how fast she figured out what it took to get that difficult job done. I don't remember the specific tasks she performed. What I do remember is that she had this wonderful, innate understanding of people and human relationships, an empathy that gave her judgment and common sense. Those are qualities that make one capable of doing almost anything well, and I knew then she would be a great lawyer. Because while we study long and hard to learn the law, the practice of law is about solving human problems, so the great lawyers all have those qualities of good judgment, common sense, and what we loosely refer to as people skills.

After a few years which she spent in Washington and at William Mitchell, to my delight Anne rejoined Faegre & Benson, and we spent a few more years together in the practice of law. Her skills had matured by this time, and we were virtually equals. She was one of those people that I sought out whenever something was sticky and I needed a second opinion. That kind of consulting process produces some of the most rewarding relationships that one has in the practice of law. Anne always provided the sort of valued second opinion that I knew would be the product, again, of good judgment, common sense, and an understanding of people. Those are also qualities that are essential in the making of a wise and fair judge. So when I became a federal judge in 1991 and learned soon after that

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† Judge, U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit.

Governor Carlson was considering appointing Anne to the Hennepin County bench, I encouraged her to seek the position. I was overjoyed when she was appointed because I knew what a great judge she would be and did in fact become.

I have two other lasting memories of Anne that I would like to share with you. One, I suppose, just the two of us recall. We were in New York visiting a client a few years back. The work day was done, and we were in a large office or hotel complex returning to dinner. We rode an escalator up to a darkened mezzanine area, and there off in the corner was a grand piano. I urged Anne to play the piano because I knew about her prior musical career but had never heard her play. She resisted, but I persisted, and she relented and went to the piano and began to play. From across the passageway scurried a security person that I hadn't noticed, obviously intent on shoosing us away. But as he approached the piano he stopped and backed off without saying anything. He had the common sense and good judgment to realize that anyone who could play that beautifully would neither harm the instrument nor offend anyone who happened to be passing by. What I took away from that episode is the thought that those of you who shared Anne's music with her for many years were indeed fortunate.

Finally, I remember the speech that Anne gave at her investiture as Chief Judge of the Minnesota Court of Appeals. It was a fine speech. But what I remember most was the enthusiasm and joy with which she gave it. It was obvious to me that she was excited and delighted to be taking on the great responsibility of serving as our Chief Judge. Unfortunately, she didn't get to complete that task, and we're all poorer for the loss of her talent. But I am also grateful because for the last thirteen years of my professional life I have been enriched by having Anne Simonett as a colleague and a friend. You know, it is awfully easy to get down on lawyers and the legal profession because the problems are so hard and we humans are so fallible. And so in the years to come I hope that every time I get irritated with lawyers for the way they're presenting a case, or angry at the direction the law seems to be taking, I'll remember that a profession that attracts people like Anne Simonett, who are willing to commit their professional lives to its betterment, is truly a great profession guiding a great legal system.

Thank you Anne for being my friend.