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A TRIBUTE TO BERNARD P. BECKER

LINDA CINCOTTA†

“In the dance of friendship, so much of what you see depends on where you are standing when you look.” Bernie’s positive attitude toward people and life in general created and nurtured a sense of well-being and harmony within his office at the St. Paul Federal Building. During the five years I worked for Bernie as his secretary and calendar clerk, I saw how blest this boss of mine was and how he willingly shared himself with others. To anyone who needed help, he would set aside his own work to listen and help in any way he could. When he listened, he not only heard the words but the feelings behind them; he listened without anything that felt like a judgment. He was committed to understanding people and allowing them the time and space to get more in touch with themselves. Bernie truly gave, without cost, from his heart to others. He treated people with great respect regardless of their stature in life. His concern was genuine and pure as he accepted the “whole” person and not just certain parts.

The law clerks and interns who worked for Bernie all left reluctantly when their terms ended. It was hard for them to let go of this gifted man they had grown to admire. Bernie consistently encouraged his law clerks to use their own minds and be inquisitive in their search for the truth. If he saw anyone getting sidetracked, he gently nudged them in the right direction in a constructive, positive approach which enhanced their self-esteem and confidence. Bernie wanted good things for his staff, and he unselfishly and patiently guided us.

Bernie was a devoted husband and father who always put his family first, and his office staff became an extension of that family. The atmosphere in the office reflected Bernie’s light-hearted, fun-loving and humorous nature. He was a wonderful man to work with, and his love for life was contagious. It was delightful being around one so dynamic. Bernie’s unique manner of conveying how much he valued your friendship was un-

† Secretary to Magistrate Becker, 1986-1991.

matched. He did not walk ahead of you, nor behind you, but walked along side of you. His acceptance of those close to him was unconditional, and I cannot think of a greater gift one can give.

Attorneys were graciously greeted as they came to his office. Bernie's eagerness in helping settle conflicts in cases put these attorneys at ease. His charming and witty personality was magnetic and his sincerity was unquestioned. Many attorneys who came through our chambers and courtroom were awed by not only his brilliance and perception, but by his dedicated commitment to fairness. There were times when motion hearings would last longer than perhaps they should have, but Bernie's conviction that "everyone needs to be heard" prevailed.

Bernie was a happy man who enjoyed his life. Those of us who worked with him were anxious to be with him, anxious to learn from him. He gave us the opportunity to grow and the freedom to become better people. This is a rare talent.

I will always treasure the time I had with Bernie. I learned so much from this kind and gentle man. Words cannot express the overwhelming pride I felt in working for such a man. He was my champion! Bless you, Bernie, for being you and assisting me in my journey through life—you taught me well.