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Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

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In Appreciation of Nina S. Appel

*Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg**

“Can a woman have it all?” That question has sparked debate.¹ My answer is emphatically yes, she can have it all over her life span, though not all at once, every day or year. A woman can manage challenging work and a fulfilling family life, yet inevitably, there will be time outs from gainful occupations. Prime examples are hours devoted to care of an ailing spouse or children needing attention. Nina Schick Appel has had it all in that sense, and has inspired countless others to follow in her way.

I became acquainted with Nina Schick in my last year at Cornell University’s College of Arts and Sciences, Nina’s first year there. She seemed a picture-book coed, adorable, popular, and upbeat. Yet, as her years at Cornell revealed, she came to the University not to party, but to learn. She excelled in her academic pursuits and gained election to Phi Beta Kappa in her junior year.

We next met at Columbia Law School. By then, Nina had caught up to me. She shaved a year from her time at Cornell by enrolling, in 1956, in Columbia Law School. I had a two-year gap period after graduating from Cornell, years I joined my husband while he fulfilled his obligation to the U.S. Army. Then, after two years at Harvard Law School, I transferred to Columbia, where I joined Nina’s class, the class of 1959. The twelve women already in the class welcomed me warmly, but none more graciously than Nina. We occasionally dined together that year at our close-to-the-University apartments. Both of us were blessed with partners in life who understood and were supportive of our will to be independent. Secure in their own capacities, Al Appel and Marty Ginsburg knew that

* Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

1. See, e.g., ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER, UNFINISHED BUSINESS (Random House, 2015); Maha Atal, “*Having It All*” Was Never the Point, FORBES (June 23, 2012, 8:00 AM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mahaatal/2012/06/23/having-it-all-was-never-the-point-on-the-atlantics-cover-story/#11de269641b1>; Rebecca Traister, *Can modern women “have it all”?*, SALON (June 21, 2012, 2:25 PM), https://www.salon.com/2012/06/21/can_modern_women_have_it_all/.

a sense of humor helps one “pass through life with ease and comfort.”²

Nina and Al, early in their marriage, moved west, to Stanford University, and later, in 1973, to the Chicago vicinity. Al gained an appointment to Northwestern University’s literature faculty, and Nina learned of an opening on Loyola’s law faculty. When Nina expressed interest in filling Loyola’s need, I wrote to the Dean predicting that she would thrive as a law professor and contribute importantly to the progress of legal education. It was a safe prediction, one that proved to be entirely accurate. Nina became associate dean just three years after joining the faculty, and dean in 1983.

Five years is par for the course at the helm of a law school. Nina set a record, serving as Loyola’s dean for over two decades. In that time, she supported innovative programs in health law, child-focused law, consumer antitrust studies, and elder law. During her tenure as dean, faculty and students were encouraged and expected to engage in public service endeavors. To be a true professional, Dean Appel conveyed, one must use her knowledge and skill to improve the welfare of communities and individuals without the wherewithal to pay for legal assistance.

At the national level, Nina long served on the Council of the American Bar Association’s Section of Legal Education and Admission to the Bar. A major responsibility of the Section is to visit law schools periodically for accreditation purposes. Nina chaired the Section in its centennial year, 1992-1993. In 2003, she received the Section’s highest recognition for service to legal education, the Robert J. Kutak Award. Nina also participated in efforts to advance justice in Illinois courts and rendered yeoman aid to the Chicago Bar Association, chairing the Association’s Foundation and serving on the Association’s Long-Term Planning Committee.

As parent and grandparent, law school teacher and dean, and constant contributor to the public good, Nina’s performance has been above and beyond any call of duty. She merits a rousing Brava for all she has done to advance the wellbeing of Loyola’s students and faculty and of everyday people in need of legal services. I count myself fortunate to have known Nina as classmate, law teaching colleague, and, for years mounting to three score, treasured friend.

2. JEAN EDWARD SMITH, JOHN MARSHALL: DEFINER OF A NATION 288 (Henry Holt & Co. 1996) (quoting Justice William Paterson: “[l]augh where we can is one of the best maxims to pass through life with ease and comfort”).