



Helen S. Balick

Wilmington - Helen Shaffer Balick, Chief Judge of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware (Retired), passed away on September 24, 2020.

Judge Balick was born in Bloomsburg, PA. She took an unusual path to the legal profession. She worked as a secretary in a local law firm while still a student in the commercial section of her high school class. Upon graduation, she continued with the firm, performing duties that are now those of a paralegal. Judge Balick was encouraged to attend law school. Although lacking a college degree, she was accepted by The Dickinson School of Law based upon her performance on various Graduate Records tests and the Law School Aptitude Test. Judge Balick was one of only three women to be admitted into her law school class. In that class, she met her future husband, Bernard Balick.

After graduation, Judge Balick became a member of the Pennsylvania Bar and thereafter moved to Delaware. Although she was a member of the Pennsylvania Bar, the Delaware Board of Bar Examiners required her to pass tests in a number of subjects given by University of Delaware professors in

order to satisfy undergraduate requirements. Judge Balick was the 13th woman admitted to the Delaware Bar. She was in private practice, served as a lawyer with the Legal Aid Society, and as a Master in Family Court. In 1974, she was appointed to serve as both Magistrate Judge for the District Court and the Bankruptcy Judge, becoming the first female federal judge in Delaware. After the Bankruptcy Code became effective in 1978, Judge Balick became the full-time bankruptcy judge in Delaware, a role she held until she retired in 1998.

During her tenure on the bench, Judge Balick presided over numerous large national bankruptcy cases, including Continental Airlines, Columbia Gas Systems and Trans World Airlines, and she established procedures to efficiently administer large cases that have been adopted by bankruptcy courts throughout the country. A legal publication recognized her as one of the most influential bankruptcy judges in United States history.

Judge Balick was a member of a number of boards, including the Board of Trustees of The Dickinson School of Law, the Board of The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware, the Wilmington School Board, and was the first president of the Board of the statewide Community Legal Aid Society. Judge Balick received numerous awards, including Dickinson's Outstanding Alumni Award and the Career Achievement Award, The Delaware Alliance of Professional Women Trailblazer Award, and the Delaware State Bar Women's Leadership Award. She was a Fellow in The American College of Bankruptcy, was inducted into The Hall of Fame of Delaware Women, and was honored by the establishment of The Helen S. Balick Chair in Business Bankruptcy Law at the Widener University School of Law.

Her husband is grateful for the compassionate care provided at Kentmere Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center and Seasons Hospice.

Judge Balick's funeral was private. In lieu of flowers, gifts in memory of Judge Balick may be made to Faithful Friends Animal Society, [12 Germay Drive, Wilmington, DE 19804](#).