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Other contributors to this special issue celebrating the life of Abner Mikva will cover his many extraordinary accomplishments from another point of view. His story is truly a version of the “American Dream” writ large. I concentrate on my good fortune in associating for over fifty-five years with a man who was my boss, my law partner, my role model, and most of all my great good friend.

Ab was one of the partners who in 1960 interviewed and hired me as an associate in my present law firm, then known as Goldberg, Devoe, Shadur & Mikva. Ab was at that time chairman of the Illinois House of Representatives Judiciary Committee. Traveling with him to California and New York on legal matters provided me ample time to absorb his wise, progressive views on legal, political, and social issues.

I also worked for Ab in his unsuccessful 1966 primary campaign for US representative and in his successful campaigns for US Congress in 1968 and thereafter. The 1968 political season was filled with history-making events. The evening of the Democratic Convention riots found my future partner Mike Shakman and me in bond court acting as pro bono counsel for demonstrators being arrested haphazardly for “disorderly conduct” and “resisting arrest” charges. Toward the end of the processing, Ab showed up from Illinois Democratic Headquarters to help. About midnight the three of us proceeded to the sidewalk outside of the Hilton Hotel. It was at the last stages of what the Walker Committee later described as a “police riot.” Ab was outraged. He had finally received the reluctant endorsement of Mayor Richard J. Daley. However, he now assumed that the US attorney, appointed at the recommendation of the powerful Daley, could not objectively prosecute the attacks on the demonstrators’ civil rights. Ab decided to call a press conference for the following morning to request a special independent prosecutor. He knew this move would further deteriorate his already shaky standing with the powerful mayor. But he did not hesitate. The press conference was held—a true profile in political courage! Shortly thereafter, in November 1968,

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Abner was overwhelmingly elected and soon became an important leader, rising to the chairmanship of the influential Democratic Study Group in 1979.

I have been a board member of the DC-based Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law since 1977. Therefore, I had numerous occasions to travel to DC, always making it a point to visit with Ab either at his court of appeals chambers or for dinner. One dinner in 1986 with Abner and Arthur J. Goldberg, a founder of our law firm, was particularly memorable. For two hours I sat in silent awe absorbing Goldberg's stories of his career as general counsel for the United Steelworkers, secretary of labor, Supreme Court justice, and UN ambassador. Ab also recounted his own stories of life in the Illinois House of Representatives, as the chairman of the US House Democratic Study Group, and as a judge on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

Ab became chief judge of the DC Circuit Court in 1991. In 1994, President Bill Clinton asked that he step down from that lofty pinnacle to become White House counsel. This meant giving up lifetime tenure, diminution of judicial pension rights, and relinquishment of other important benefits. However, Ab did not hesitate to honor his president's request. Thus, Abner Mikva became one of the very few individuals to have served in high positions in all three branches of the US government.

In 1996, Ab and his equally accomplished wife Zoe returned to Chicago. He joined the faculty of his alma mater, The University of Chicago Law School, as a professor and director of the Mandel Legal Aid Clinic. In mid-2000, he suggested that my wife Pat and I join him in a small gathering to meet a fellow law school professor, Illinois State Senator Barack Obama. Senator Obama was then running against the incumbent, Representative Bobby Rush, in the primary for the US House of Representatives. I had never heard of Obama. After hearing him speak at that small gathering I turned to my wife and expressed my highest possible political praise, "He is another Ab Mikva!" I proceeded to support Obama's political aspirations, and endeavored to enable him to become better known to important community leaders.

I was able to do this because since 1995 we have conducted, principally at our Miller Shakman & Beem law firm conference room, a monthly discussion group of thirty-five to forty-five persons, known as "The Public Affairs Roundtable." This group consists of many community leaders in law, journalism, and government. Accordingly, I invited Obama to join the group, at first as

an attendee and subsequently as a discussion leader. Abner, who attended most of the meetings, continued to be an important mentor and supporter as Obama moved politically onward and upward, ultimately to the pinnacle as president of the United States.

Soon after the Mikvas returned to Chicago, I introduced Ab to another outstanding Roundtable attendee, Dr. Leon Lederman. Lederman, a Nobel laureate for physics, was at that time serving as director of the US accelerator laboratory known generally as “Fermilab.” These two great citizens, both sons of poor, Yiddish-speaking immigrants, had much in common, including a passion for justice and participatory democracy plus a well-developed sense of humor. For many years, and several times annually, Pat and I would drive with the Mikvas to Batavia for cocktails and dinner with the Ledermans on the grounds of Fermilab. The round trip could take up to three hours, which gave the Millers a wonderful opportunity to hear uninterrupted episodes of Ab and Zoe’s remarkable careers.

In the twenty-year history of the Public Affairs Roundtable, Abner led five sessions. Two of those sessions combined him with his lifelong friend, the equally accomplished former FCC Chairman Newton Minow. These two great Americans were born four days apart in the same Milwaukee hospital. They had each served as editor-in-chief of their respective law reviews, had clerked at the same time for two US Supreme Court justices, and had gone on to separate distinguished careers in law, government, and foundation chairmanships. In 2006, they reached eighty years of age. We conducted a wonderful Roundtable session at which the two gentlemen reviewed their respective careers and commented on current events. In January 2016, we again scheduled a Roundtable session to coincide exactly with Ab’s ninetieth birthday date. As in 2006, the two great friends sat side-by-side as a parade of attendees showered them with respect and affection followed by a heartfelt group rendition of “Happy Birthday.”

In recent years Ab’s health began to fade. He therefore spent most of his time at home participating in the care of his beloved wife Zoe, who was also in poor health. Nevertheless, his lively interest and involvement in politics and current events continued unabated. To accommodate this situation, I arranged for many lunchtime mini-Roundtable sessions consisting of four or five politically and legally sophisticated friends who were regular Roundtable attendees. Ab often expressed his appreciation for my

organizational efforts. In truth, it was a labor of love since I and the invitees were eager to receive Ab's legal and political insights.

One final story demonstrates Ab's universal popularity. In mid-2015, a Saturday *Chicago Tribune* article stated that former US Representative Barney Frank, coarchitect of the Dodd-Frank Act, would appear the following Wednesday at a noon Union League Luncheon Club book signing. I assumed that Ab knew Frank and invited him to be my guest. I contacted the club and explained the relationship between Ab and Frank. The event organizer arranged for the three of us to be seated together during the lunch. When I told Frank that Ab would be seated with him, he said Ab was not only a great friend but one of his heroes. A lively conversation between the two took place over lunch.

When the time came for Frank to address the group, he opened his remarks by stating that present in the assemblage was a great American, one who had served in all three branches of the US government and was a mentor to many, including President Barack Obama. He stated that Obama had recently awarded Judge Mikva the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. There followed a rousing round of applause. After the session, eight or ten people stood in line to shake Ab's hand, explaining where and how they had worked on his behalf, and expressing their continuing admiration and gratitude for all that he had done. Meanwhile, I stood silently by, watching and reminding myself of my extreme good fortune to have been a close friend of such a unique and outstanding citizen.