Soia Mentschikoff
By Jim Reynolds, ’68

During the mid-1960s, the Law School faculty was unmatched anywhere in the Western world. Among that group, Soia Mentschikoff etched the most indelible impressions. She was a person of considerable stature—physically, scholastically, and experientially. When Soia entered a room, everyone knew immediately of her presence. When she spoke, I wanted to hear everything she had to say. She taught secured transactions with the authority of one who had written the UCC section. She could be stern, to be sure, but her smile exposed the big-hearted woman that she in fact was.

Soia taught Elements during those years after her husband passed away. I felt so privileged to be instructed by the longtime wife and associate of the man who wrote The Bramble Bush. If Karl Llewellyn was now gone from us, aren’t we lucky to have Soia with us? I thought. What a gift! Right off the bat, first class as an entering student, we are introduced to this giant of a person who is going to insist that we take this calling seriously.

She impressed upon us that we were about to become trustees of our society and that we would graduate not just with opportunity but with obligations that would stay with us a lifetime.

Soia met with the spouses of students, warning them of their lives ahead married to a law student and later a practicing attorney. The law, she said, was a very jealous mistress. She wanted her students to be free to be the best.

Soia Mentschikoff, more than any other faculty member, instilled in me the ability to speak and advocate with the confidence of one fully knowledgeable and grounded in my craft. That gift has carried me safely through the briar patch of life’s many challenges in the law, business, community, and politics. Thank you, ma’am.