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In Memoriam: Judith Campbell Meyer

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IN MEMORIAM

JUDITH CAMPBELL MEYER

Michelle Rahman

When Judy Meyer applied to the law school for a position in the admissions office in 1999, little did she know that she would become part of a very tight-knit team—a family. When called back for a third interview, she came, but in what we were to find out to be characteristic Judy-fashion, asked, “What kind of a job *is* this that takes three interviews?” Judy was seeking a job. I was seeking someone who would fit in with our philosophy of “students first above all.” I was seeking someone as dedicated as the rest of us who did not mind working every minute of every day. Judy fit the bill.

This began as a J.O.B.-job for Judy. She was vociferous in her declarations that she was not going to get “sucked in like the rest of you.” For the first year or two, Judy had one foot out the door as, after all, she was not *really* committed. This was just a job. Right!

It was insidious. She started to be known by students, students began to talk to her, and we depended on her. That 100-watt smile and welcoming attitude, not to mention her prodigious work ethic, became such an integral part of our lives. “If there’s nothing to do, I’m going home,” she would say. There was *always* a lot to do and she worked *hard* every day and . . . she stayed. For eleven years she stayed. She stayed because she had committed to the law school family, and you do not walk away from family. She stayed until she could not. She lived until she did not.

So, Judy did get “sucked in,” and she loved it, and we loved her. You never knew when she would “crack wise,” and we accused her of being a Northerner (well, she was from north of the Mason Dixon line). Judy was notoriously frugal (gosh, we even called her

“cheap”). So, I was surprised to find, about a year ago, that she was part of an office effort to win the lottery. Judy would even go buy the tickets! It occurred to me that if the office actually won we might have a “problem.” I stood in front of her desk and said, “Judy, if y’all win, it occurs to me that the entire office would not come to work tomorrow and that would be bad for the University.” Judy looked up at me, beamed her famous smile and said, in a drawl, “I think you have me confused with someone who cares.” She confessed later, as I already knew, that such was her commitment to the law school that she still would come to work, but she might take longer lunch hours.

Several months before her death Judy underwent surgery, and we anticipated she would be recuperating for the required six weeks. So strong was her dedication that at home after two days, she already was working, helping us recruit the class that entered this fall. Rather than spending six weeks at home, she was back in two. Judy’s J.O.B.-job long ago morphed into true commitment as she became a vital and much-loved part of the law school family. We counted on her to help push the proverbial rock uphill every minute of every day, all the while smiling. And she did.

Judy was as totally committed to her family as she was to our students. She insisted on home-cooked meals for her husband—every day leaving at 4:30 p.m. as if there was a house afire. She *had* to get home to cook. Woe unto anyone who stood between her and the door at 4:30! What she never told anyone is how many more hours she put in at home. Not long ago, Judy was working on a particularly thorny problem that was causing her a lot of stress. She had put in many long hours on the project and came to me to request “comp time.” I hedged because we really could not afford to have anyone out of the office as everyone was running full out. She pressed, and I finally got exasperated saying, “Judy, just charge for the overtime.” Her response was, “You know I don’t care about the money; I care about the time.” Little did we know how little time remained as this was only a month before her untimely death. I suspect there’s a lesson in there for all of us!

One reads daily about tragedy in others’ lives. Until it touches our own lives, we are immune to the pain affecting others except in a peripheral way. In a moment’s time the world changes, and a life is gone. The shock of losing Judy Meyer in such a senseless

way, of not getting the opportunity to say goodbye, of not having a chance to give a final hug, of not telling her how much she mattered, has left an indelible mark on so many. If you are really lucky in your life, you get to make a difference to at least one person. Judy lived well; she made a difference to many. She was lucky. And we were lucky to have had her love, her smile, her commitment to us and others, and we will remember her.

It is said, "To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die." Judy is living still in our hearts, and as long as she lives in yours, she is with us still.
