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President's Column

Peter Sferrazza



In this column, we celebrate the service of Shelley Rockwell who is retiring April 3, 2020. She has 35 Years and 10 months of service as an employee of the National Center for State Courts.

Shelley's initial position was in "Secretariat Services"—now Association Services—in an administrative support position. She was promoted to Staff Associate in 1987; her work was pretty much the same as what she does now—managing associations, and watching over *Court Review*. Titles have changed along the way but Shelley has been the glue that held the AJA together in good times and bad.

Shelley has received many accolades about her excellent work effort and "superior" service to the associations she has staffed. Comments such as the following are peppered throughout her file—"Shelley is always cooperative, courteous and helpful." "Her efficiency was beyond the call of duty."

The following comments by some past Presidents are concurred in by all of us.

"There are few people in life who really are not replaceable. Shelly Rockwell is one of those very rare people. When I became President of AJA I sought to name her the AJA Historian. I thought my logic was impeccable after all no one knows as much about AJA's history as Shelly. Besides surely no one would challenge the President's choice to be the AJA Historian. I should have known better. Some judge objected claiming Shelly wasn't eligible. So she never actually became the AJA Historian but we just kept asking her 'what happened?' 'how did we get here?' and 'who was that judge?' There is one other historical fact about Shelly's service that actually is well known. She made every AJA President a lot better leader than they naturally would have been. And that is yet another reason Shelly is not replaceable."

Hon. Kevin Burke

"Shelley is not replaceable that is true. She is sue generis, not only because she is so knowledgeable about AJA and NCSC which may have made her an excellent historian, but because of her character, her work ethic, her warmth and that she is always the consummate professional." Hon. Elliott L. Zide

"When I first became active in AJA, I didn't understand the great feeling of goodwill people had for Shelley Rockwell. Sure, she did a good job—but it was her job. What I found out over

time was that Shelley never treated it as just a job. Year in, year out, day in, day out, she always put in the extra effort needed to be sure that no balls were dropped, AJA's volunteer leaders looked good, and AJA remained strong. Equally important, she kept contact with and cared about the people in AJA she has worked with, making her the connecting link that has brought so many of us together and kept us in touch literally for decades." Hon. Steven Leben

The following are comments by the editorial board of *Court Review*, for which she provided expert service, and NCSC staff.

"My two cents are that Shelley is the backbone. She has been invaluable to *Court Review*. Her professionalism, prompt responsiveness, and knowledge all made our work with *Court Review* much easier. I know I am extremely grateful for her." Eve Brank.

"Coming on board to *Court Review* and trying to live up to the high standards set by others, Shelley has always been a calming but insistent force helping smooth that transition. She has proven herself to be all knowing when we have questions, possessed of a bottomless well of patience for our challenges, and a reliable source of wisdom in counsel." David Prince

"Shelley was welcoming, friendly, and extremely helpful when I started with *Court Review*. She was and still is essential in my ability to navigate and understand the publishing process." Terra Garay

"With Shelley Rockwell retiring in about six weeks, I am writing to bring you up to speed on our plans for Shelley's successor with AJA. To start with, and to state the obvious, we are all going to miss Shelley. In addition to her dedication, grace, and amazing work ethic, we will all miss the institutional knowledge that she provides to us when we make decisions about what's best for AJA.

"Even after Shelley announced her retirement, she participated in the interviews to select her successor. We conducted an open and competitive search for the best candidates. It's great news that we will have a full month to overlap with Shelley before she leaves us." Jesse Rutledge

As President of the AJA, it has been my honor and pleasure to have worked with Shelley Rockwell. She will be missed by all of us. On behalf of the AJA family thank you for your dedication and service. We wish you and your husband a long and happy retirement.

