

*Eulogy for Arlen Specter
Delivered October 16, 2012
By Steve Harmelin*

**As I stand here before you and see the size of this crowd, I can feel the presence of Senator Specter whispering quietly to me... “look at all these people... is there any way we can turn this into a fundraiser?”*

Mortality never encountered a man with more true grit than Arlen Specter. He lost his last battle on Sunday, but his example of character and courage will live on in our memories. My friend of 45 years was quite a guy and all of us will miss him.

Many of you here today worked with him over the past five decades. During that period all of us may have been called upon on occasion to justify or defend his position on a given vote or issue, but I submit with extraordinary pride that none of us were ever called upon to question or defend his integrity – not once. Consider, he recorded over 10,000 votes, and served 30 years in the United States Senate – that is more than just a career – that is a body of work.

Perhaps history will conclude that the \$10 billion in stimulus funds set aside at his direction for the advance of medical research will be remembered as the Senator’s greatest gift to posterity. Ask any scientist in the field and he or she will confirm that the Senator’s support for research funding of this size and scope was a game changer that will hopefully save the lives of some in this room, our children and grandchildren.

It is no small challenge for me to capture and convey in a very few minutes a life as rich and textured as that of the Senator's. He set a high standard in his 8 year tenure from 1965 through 1973 as Philadelphia's District Attorney. He prosecuted both the mean and the mighty with a Midwestern sense indignation arising out of his Kansas upbringing. As D.A. he established a bipartisan office to fight crime, indict the corrupt and provide support and justice to the victims. He hired the very best and never asked what political party, if any, they belonged to.

By 1967 he and his running mate, Councilman Tom Gola, earned reputations for honesty that gave authenticity to a mayoralty campaign conducted under the slogan "they're tougher, they're younger, and nobody owns them." That election was lost by less than 1% of the vote on a sad day for him – and a tragic one for the city. Reelected in 1969 as D.A., people often forget that he then lost every campaign for public office until he won the United States Senate race ten years later. During this very difficult decade a recurring theme of our friendship was how often I would try to talk him out of running again for public office and how often we would end up together in another losing effort. **When the Senator and I agreed to support the retention of an incumbent Rabbi in an election for his retention... and lost, at least I realized I had no future in politics, and went back to my day job as a lawyer.*

Arlen would always make the tough calls - from the single bullet theory to the stimulus vote. He made up his mind, he kept his word, he stayed the course

because that's who he was. He paid a high price for how often he went his own way and could rarely escape the relentless requirements of fame and power. Those closest could calculate the cost most accurately, but could never fully appreciate the wear and tear that the pressure of party loyalty and life in the public arena exacts. However, he chose it – and he loved it. He knew down deep that he made a difference not only in the lives of the citizens of this Commonwealth, but of this nation. He would however often opine the most important thing he did each day was his daily squash match and that often it was the only important thing he did all day. If there is a heaven, it has squash courts and a reasonably competitive opponent – that Arlen could defeat with some regularity.

He loved his blondie – his wife, Joan. It was a partnership that gained strength with age and depth with adversity. He was so proud of Shanin and Stephen and of Tracey and those beautiful and talented young Specter women, Silvi, Perri, Lilli, and Hatti, who are his granddaughters.

There is a legacy also for him in the reputation for excellence and independence of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals and those he mentored in public service such as Gov. Ed Rendell, Judge Michael Baylson, Judge Bud DuBois, and Midge Rendell, Judge Anthony Scirica, Congressman Pat Meehan, former District Attorney Lynne Abraham, Michael Rotko, Stephanie Middleton, Carolyn Short, and the list goes on. The life of these and so many others were enlarged and improved because they worked with and were close to Arlen Specter.

As I was pondering last night what to say, I heard the voice of Bette Midler on the radio singing a song she made famous called *The Rose*. The lyrics of the second verse struck home:

**It's the heart, afraid of breaking
That never learns to dance
It's the dream, afraid of waking
That never takes the chance
It's the one who won't be taken
Who cannot seem to give
And the soul, afraid of dying
That never learns to live**

Arlen Specter ran extraordinary risks and lived life to the fullest. Joan; to his country, to his constituents, and to those closest to him, his life mattered... and that I suggest in the end is what matters.

Thank you