

MEMORIAL CEREMONY

FOR

**THE HONORABLE  
LAURIE SMITH CAMP**

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF NEBRASKA



Tuesday, November 23, 2021  
2:00 p.m.

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Hixson-Lied Auditorium  
Mike and Josie Harper Center  
Creighton University



**HONORABLE LAURIE SMITH CAMP**

1953 - 2020

CHIEF JUDGE ROSSITER: Thank you for being here.

I'm Chief Judge Bob Rossiter. And at long last we, the judges and staff of the United States District Court for the District of Nebraska, are able to properly pay our respects to our beloved colleague, Judge Laurie Smith Camp.

We have postponed, due to COVID, for 14 months out from that date, but we are able, albeit in masks, to move forward with what I'm going to refer to as a celebration. And that's what it should be, a celebration of an amazing life and career, and not only in the law.

Many tributes have recently taken place: by the Omaha Bar Association, of which Judge Smith Camp was the president; the Nebraska State Bar Association at its annual meeting that was just held in October, I believe; and, most recently, the moving remarks by Judge Gerrard in our Eighth Circuit Judicial Conference. And I commend you to his remarks. We will have them up on our website here within a couple of weeks.

I want to thank Dean Joshua Fershée for arranging the use of this beautiful auditorium. We determined that our Special Proceedings Courtroom -- and we can see that that was true -- was not going to be big enough for this event and would be close quarters. The last thing we wanted to do was put 40 people in that courtroom and have to video stream to other courtrooms.

Dean Fershée could not join us today, but Craig Dallon,

the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, is here in his stead. And thank you, Dean Dallon.

I want to first recognize and welcome Judge Smith Camp's family and close friends. I won't introduce everybody, but they are in this middle section: Son, Jonathan, and his wife, Laura, and Laurie's grandson, Carter; daughter, Abby, and her husband, Ben; sister, Kay Bruce; Lee Shell; as well as other family and friends seated in that middle section.

I also want to recognize other guests here.

Congressman Don Bacon is here and joins us and reminded me that Judge Laurie Smith Camp swore him in when he was elected.

I don't know if Brad Ashford is here. He was -- former Congressman Brad Ashford -- there he is -- is here as well.

Governor Pete Ricketts. Thank you, Governor, for being here.

Attorney General Doug Peterson; former Attorney General and former boss of Laurie Smith Camp, Don Stenberg.

Also with us is Mayor Jean Stothert and her Chief of Staff and my Creighton seatmate at Creighton basketball games, Thomas Warren.

Also here, and I told him he was stepping up in a section of VIPs, but Richard Moberly. He's always trying to move in on whatever. But, no. Thank you, Dean Moberly, for being here. We appreciate it.

I am going to miss introducing some judicial guests, but

we are all grateful for your travel, those of you who have traveled.

We have two Eighth Circuit judges here, including our own Steve Grasz. Ralph Erickson drove from Fargo just for this event. He was here last week hearing cases, drove home, and then came back.

From the Nebraska Supreme Court, we have Chief Justice Michael Heavican and Justice Stephanie Stacy.

From the Nebraska Court of Appeals we have Chief Judge Mike Pirtle, Judge Francie Riedmann, and Judge David Arterburn.

Our court: Judge Gerrard is here; Judge Brian Buescher; Judge Joseph Bataillon, who will speak here in a few moments; Senior Judge Richard Kopf; Magistrate Judge F.A. Gossett. Magistrate Judge Cheryl Zwart could not be with us today. Magistrate Judge Susan Bazis is here, and Magistrate Judge Michael Nelson.

We also have our bankruptcy judges: Judge Tom Saladino and fairly newly admitted Bankruptcy Judge Brian Kruse.

What's even more amazing is we have judges here, federal judges, from our sister districts. District of Iowa, we have Judge Stephanie Rose, Judge James Gritzner. I think Judge Pratt was going to be here. I don't see him. Magistrate Judge Helen Adams, Magistrate Judge Celeste Bremer, and Bankruptcy Judge Anita Shodeen.

From the District of South Dakota, we have Chief Judge

Roberto Lange and Magistrate Judge Veronica Duffy.

Nebraska trial judges, I'm sure I'm missing somebody of the group, but I did see retired Judge Patricia Lamberty, who was a good friend of Judge Smith Camp's.

I'll introduce our speakers here in a few moments, but I'm sure I've missed some notable guests and I apologize for that. Whoever you are, we appreciate you being here and I'm sure the family does as well.

For those that -- many others sent their regrets. We are recording this session and that will be uploaded to our court website and available to those who would want to rewatch what happened today or those who weren't able to make it.

I want to thank my committee members who put this wonderful program together: Sarah Beringer; Brenda Fauber, Judge Smith Camp's former court reporter; Jane Fischer; Laura Garcia-Hein; Denise Lucks, our clerk of court; and Mary Roundtree, who was a courtroom deputy for Judge Smith Camp.

We also got help from my friend Nancy Svoboda, retired from the United States Attorney's Office, and she helped with -- she and Laura Garcia-Hein handled these beautiful floral arrangements. And I will tell you as an aside, these arrangements, Nancy set this up so that these arrangements are going to go to the Siena Francis House for those who are having Thanksgiving dinner there to decorate the serving table and the tables there.

Again, I'm sorry if I missed anybody but we'll move ahead with the program.

I want to introduce here -- I want to introduce Larry Wright. Larry Wright, Jr., is a citizen of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska and the Director of Leadership and Engagement for the National Congress of American Indians. He has served as Chairman of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska for over 11 years.

Mr. Wright has a background in education and management. For six years he served as a social studies teacher for seventh- to twelfth-graders in the Lincoln Public Schools, and he's owned his own general contracting business.

Chairman Wright is an infantry veteran with service in the United States Army National Guard.

He earned his bachelor degree in social science from the University of Nebraska at Kearney and his master's degree in historical studies from Nebraska Wesleyan.

We decided that, recognizing Judge Smith Camp's respect for and knowledge of native culture and history, that it was fitting for Chairman Wright to lead us in a native prayer to begin this celebration.

Chairman Wright.

MR. WRIGHT: Thank you. It is an honor to be asked to do this today and I humbly accept this.

As I pray in my language, I ask that each of you pray in your own way, and thank you.

(Mr. Wright prayed in the Ponca language.)

Great Spirit, Father God, as we pray to you, we thank you for this day. We ask that you watch over all of our people, all the two-leggeds on this earth. And in our way, we say (speaking in Ponca), that we're all related, we all come together. We pray together for the betterment of all of our people.

We come here today to celebrate Judge Laurie Smith Camp and thank you for bringing her into our lives and making us better for that experience.

We say special prayers today for all her family, all her friends, that knew her, loved her, and will always cherish those times. We thank you for all the blessings that you give all of our people.

(Mr. Wright spoke in Ponca.)

Thank you.

CHIEF JUDGE ROSSITER: Thank you, Chairman Wright.

I'm going to introduce a good friend of Laurie Smith Camp's for over 50 years. Camille Metoyer Moten is a native of Omaha and graduate of Burke High School and Xavier University of New Orleans. She's been singing and acting in the city and the surrounding region for 35 years. She's an independent singer-songwriter and performs for many special events around our city and as a guest soloist, as well as has her own pop and jazz band that performs for special events locally and around

the state.

Her musical travels have taken her to Barcelona and Germany. She has appeared with the symphony, the ballet, at the Governor's Ball and numerous galas.

She was nominated as Omaha's top jazz vocalist for 2015 and 2019, and was inducted into the Omaha Black Musicians Hall of Fame as well as the Nebraska Musicians Hall of Fame. She has released three CDs.

As I said, she's shared a 50-plus-year friendship with Judge Laurie Smith Camp. She will now perform the "American Anthem" and will close these proceedings with another number.

Camille.

MS. METOYER MOTEN: I wasn't expecting all that bio. I hope I can live up to what he wrote down.

(Camille Metoyer Moten sang "American Anthem.")

(Applause)

CHIEF JUDGE ROSSITER: Thank you. That was beautiful.

I want to get one thing out of the way. I do not wear lavender ties. I'm wearing this tie and ordered this tie in honor of Laurie, and you can see the lavender. That was her color, at least the color that we saw that she wore with her robe. And you'll also see the court staff, most of the court staff, is wearing lavender masks, so that's the reason for

that.

I also want to say, as I look around at the crowd here, that probably 80 percent of you, if not more, could come up here and tell a story about Judge Smith Camp. We considered a semi-open mic, but we would have been here forever. And that's a testament to her. So what we did is decided on three speakers. And the first speaker is Senior Judge Joseph Bataillon.

Camille, he won't have near the bio that you have.

He was nominated by President Clinton in 1997, assumed senior status -- and that's the key to me, because that meant a seat opened for me -- senior status in 2014. He has stayed a very active judge with our district. And I will tell you too that Joe was selfless. When Judge Smith Camp passed away, it took him literally a half day, if not less, to say, "I will take on all of her criminal cases." And he's done that -- and he wasn't taking criminal cases before that -- so we're very grateful to him.

He has been active nationally with the courts, was a former Chief Judge here, and we are pleased -- as you can see from the program, the two judges that served longest with Judge Smith Camp will be speaking, Judge Bataillon here, and Senior Judge Kopf will be giving a toast here when the ceremony is over.

But without further ado, Senior Judge Joe Bataillon.

SENIOR JUDGE BATAILLON: Thank you, Judge Rossiter.

Laurie Smith Camp. Our compatriot in the judge business. Our leader as Chief Judge. Our social director every holiday season. Our personal counselor. Someone who taught us about style by her example. Someone who personally monitored and mentored students, staff, and lawyers around the state and the country. Someone who showed care for us. Someone we called friend.

So let's talk a minute about the judge business. The judge business is an odd profession. People expect you to make judgments only God knows the answer to. Who wins, loses, goes to jail, how long they go to jail. You have to have confidence in your decisions, but you don't want to be arrogant or too self-assured. And for goodness' sakes, don't lecture the lawyers, the witnesses, or the parties no matter how much they might deserve it.

Every case is important, of course, but the high-profile cases are the cases that people remember. So I asked one of Laurie's law clerks to identify some high-profile cases for me, cases that he thought she would be proud of.

Well, *Planned Parenthood vs. Heineman*, striking down a law requiring mental health exams for patients who wanted to have abortions; *In Re: UP Railroad Employees Practices Litigation*, in which she decided major employers were required to provide FDA-approved contraception medication to all of its employees;

*Keller vs. The City of Fremont*, voiding a city ordinance denying housing to undocumented aliens.

Like many of us, most of the cases that the law clerk identified, including two of the three that I just mentioned, were reversed by the circuit. Being a trial judge is a tough business.

Chief Judge Smith Camp kept us on track as our court continued to lead the judiciary with shared administrative services, evidence-based probation supervision practices, and sharing our talented Chief Unit Executives and their staffs with the rest of the country and the federal judiciary.

She took time to mentor our staff one-on-one, people from the top all the way to people at the bottom. She supported them professionally and personally.

She even made sure that old men like me came together on holidays to reacquaint each other and to remember that we were all part of the same court, not lone black-robed hermits administering the law.

She gently helped some of our number understand retirement can be rewarding and it's an important time to celebrate their contribution to the courts. And I can only say that when the Chief Judge comes to me to give me that information, I hope that he or she is as understanding as Laurie was.

She did all of this with grace and style and a very dry sense of humor.

So I came from a family that was in the clothing business. And I wanted to know why she kept wearing such stylish high heels. I mean, just as a fashion statement. Was it the color? Was it style or comfort? Was it tradition? Was it her personal sense of preference? No, she told me, the real reason was because she liked to wear them so that when she stepped down off the bench to do a sidebar, that she can look down on certain problem lawyers.

Through all of those times and through her own personal trials and tribulations, she still showed care for all of us. She always remembered birthdays and anniversaries with a card or a warm greeting in chambers. We judges really didn't know much about her outside life outside of the courthouse. None of us were personal friends to Warren Buffett, nor did we personally correspond with Justice Ginsburg, nor did we dance at the National Museum of the Native American with Justice Sotomayor.

We knew outside the courthouse she was having fun. It was a rich life, diverse, and it was rewarding. We knew many people looked up to her. We knew she nurtured many people. We knew she supported many causes and cultural endeavors. And we know that her legacy lives on.

Laurie Smith Camp was our compatriot, leader, and friend.

We miss her.

(Applause)

CHIEF JUDGE ROSSITER: Thank you, Judge Bataillon.

Our next speaker is retired Judge Mary C. Gilbride. Judge Gilbride is a retired District Judge who served the Fifth Judicial District in the State of Nebraska for 26 years.

She is a 1982 graduate of the Creighton University School of Law, where I first met her, and a longtime friend with Judge Smith Camp.

Judge Gilbride served as law clerk to Judge Leslie Boslaugh, on the Nebraska Supreme Court. From 1984 to 1992, she was in-house legal counsel at Peter Kiewit Sons'. In 1992, she was appointed by Governor Nelson to serve as a County Judge in her district; and six years later, in 1998, Governor Nelson appointed her to serve as District Judge of the Fifth Judicial District. At the time of her appointment to the district bench, she became the first woman to have served at both levels of Nebraska's trial courts.

Judge Gilbride retired from the bench in 2018. She is a Lifetime Fellow of the Nebraska State Bar Foundation. In 2018 she received the Outstanding Contributor to Women in the Law Award from the Women and the Law Section of the Nebraska State Bar Association. She was also the recipient of the Nebraska State Bar Association's Legal Pioneer Award in 2019.

Judge Gilbride.

(Applause)

JUDGE GILBRIDE: All of that's a way of saying that

I'm Judge Smith Camp's friend from where the rubber meets the road in Wahoo, Nebraska.

I first met Judge Smith Camp when we were assigned to a panel that was judging a Moot Court competition round here at Creighton. I remember driving into Omaha, trying to remember what were the law and the facts that we were going to hear that day. I was probably more than a little frazzled. I next remember taking the bench with the most elegant, serene, gracious, and brilliant judge that I had ever met. I was more than a little intimidated.

And as I prepared for my remarks today, that same sense of awe and intimidation struck me. What could I say that would be equal to the task that would capture the full measure of the person and the spirit of Judge Smith Camp? I read many of the tributes that were written about her after her death, and each writer conveyed an implicit conclusion that mere words were insufficient to describe all that she was. I spoke to many who knew her, and found that everyone knew her -- from hairstylist to her law school classmates, to just about every man and woman in the professions and the arts -- and everyone held her in the highest esteem.

Not long after I met Judge Smith Camp, I was invited to join a small social group of women, all of us attorneys. Some of us, like Laurie, were on the bench. All of us worked in positions in state or federal government. It was a warm,

supportive group of women -- a community of women -- and we met nearly every month for over a decade. We called ourselves Whine, with an H, and Cheese, but Brenda Fauber tells me we appeared on the Judge's calendar as "The Usual Suspects."

We would meet at each other's homes or in local restaurants. We talked about law stuff, of course, but more often we talked about our lives, children, art, travel, movies and books. And we laughed. A lot.

Among the things that we shared and laughed about were those delicious moments that occur in all courtrooms, that when something hilarious happens, but decorum requires that you keep a straight face. Laurie, who had a sharp sense of humor, was expert at these moments.

One evening, the five of us were in a restaurant, puzzling over a phrase used in a pro se pleading. One of the group decided to look it up in the Urban Dictionary. The definition prompted gales of embarrassed laughter. And at just this moment, an esteemed local attorney approached the table. Four of us quickly looked down at the tableware; but Laurie, without missing a beat, turned to greet him in such a warm and dignified manner that I am certain he never suspected a thing.

My dearest personal memory of Laurie occurred about ten years ago. My youngest sister had just passed away from an aggressive form of cancer. Peg had held on long enough to hear

the news that her first grandchild had been safely delivered. An hour later, Peg died.

Laurie was, of course, one of the first people to reach out to me. "Your sister," she said, "has become the grandmother of legend, the grandmother who we never met or were too young to remember. That grandmother is beautiful, brilliant and heroic and all the wonderful things that can be imagined about her. That grandmother is legendary."

I think about Laurie each time I have the privilege of telling Peg's now seven grandchildren about their "legendary" grandmother.

But I realize now that Judge Smith Camp might well have been speaking about herself, as she too has entered into the ranks of "legendary" grandmother to her grandchildren, some with us and some about to be born. But she has also entered into the ranks of other classes of legends: legendary women, legendary judges, and legendary Nebraskans.

So it's my great privilege here today, with an assist from her favorite Nebraska author, Willa Cather, to "make the record" or, more appropriately, to expand the record, of her great legacy and to assure those generations of grandchildren, and forthcoming generations of women, lawyers, judges in Nebraska, that she is indeed a legendary role model, and all the good and wonderful things that can be imagined about her are true.

In *The Song of the Lark*, Cather wrote:

Oh, it's a question of big personality...and all that goes with it. Brains, of course. Imagination, of course. But the important thing is that she was born full of color, with a rich personality. That's a gift of the gods....

Deb Gilg, former United States Attorney, and Laurie's law school classmate, remembers Laurie as a serious law student of the '70s, coming to class in well-worn jeans with her red hair tied up in a scarf. Deb describes her as a "vibrant, fierce and fearless" student.

She was vibrant indeed. She was possessed of a sharp sense of humor, of the type that is supported by an underlying brilliance, expressed with a million-watt smile. She was warm, kind, generous and gracious. She never missed an opportunity to be welcoming and supportive.

Her intelligence, humor, kindness and impeccable grace made her a wonderful friend, colleague and judge.

In *O Pioneers!*, Cather described the qualities of a pioneer:

A pioneer should have imagination, should be able to enjoy the idea of things more than the things themselves.

Judge Smith Camp was a lifetime learner -- and teacher -- who pursued the ideas of so many things. Her diverse interests covered an amazing spectrum. She enjoyed educating herself about the issues in complex litigation. She was a generous patron of the arts. She loved the theater. She was devoted to

public service. She enjoyed travel. She was an avid reader. She was a marvelously talented gardener; her backyard was beyond compare. She was a most gracious hostess and evenings spent at her home were filled with beautiful music and great conversation with the many people whose friendship she cultivated.

She also liked muscle cars and hot yoga!

She particularly enjoyed mentoring young people and often invited groups of young people to her home for an evening of conversation and making connections. The children of "The Usual Suspects" were often included in these invitations, and my daughter absolutely adored her.

My favorite quotation from Willa Cather, and I suspect that it might have been one of Laurie's, is found in *O Pioneers!* where Cather wrote:

The fact that I was a girl never damaged my ambitions to be a pope or an emperor.

One need only to watch Judge Smith Camp's TED Talk about Cubs and Brownies or to watch her Nebraska State Historical Society lecture "Women's Rights: Fast Forward Fifty Years" to understand the importance of women's issues to her.

She began questioning the systemic inequity between men and women in education and in the workplace at an early age. As a new law school graduate, she too experienced the gender bias that the women of our generation, and the generations of

our mothers before us, also experienced.

These experiences shaped her as she progressed through her remarkable legal career. The empowerment and advancement of women in the legal profession were high priorities for Judge Smith Camp as she mentored countless numbers of young women. She was one of the millions of "cracks in the glass ceiling" and she encouraged and inspired other women to take a crack at it as well.

In a column written for the *Nebraska Journal* in 1894, a young Willa Cather wrote:

In the words of the only sensible sentence in a very senseless book, "There is only one thing that society loves more than sinning, and that is administering justice." Yes, in the long run, society is just. It does not mean to be or try to be, but somehow in the course of events, in the very nature of things, it stumbles upon justice.

Oh, Miss Cather, how very uninformed you were! The administration of justice is not "stumbled" upon, as we in the legal community are well aware. It is a system founded on generations of legal scholarship and rules and sculpted by education, training and practice.

Judge Smith Camp understood and respected the awesome power of the courts. She understood the price that the exercise of "judicial independence" might exact. She also knew that judges must personify justice. As Aristotle noted:

To go to a judge is to go to justice, for the ideal judge is, so to speak, justice personified.

Judge Smith Camp was justice personified. She was dedicated to leveling the playing field of minorities, the poor and disadvantaged with the wealthy and privileged sectors of society. She was always respectful and fair to the lawyers and litigants. She was always prepared. She always brought her "A" game, as one commentator noted, and always maintained an even temperament. She loved celebratory ceremonies over which judges are privileged to preside: weddings and naturalization ceremonies. She was a judge's judge, and a role model to all judges serving in Nebraska, especially among those of us who were in the "sistern." Those of us who are privileged to practice law would do well to emulate her.

Shortly before she died, my sister told me, "Don't make a saint out of me." I rather suspect that Laurie would tell us the same thing. But it is impossible to reflect back upon her legacy, her accomplishments and her pioneer spirit, and not to speak of her in the most glowing terms.

I close with a brief sentence from *My Antonia*, as we honor Judge Smith Camp and comfort one another as we continue to recover from this great loss:

Ain't it wonderful, Jim, how much people can mean to each other?

Thank you.

(Applause)

CHIEF JUDGE ROSSITER: And she liked sitting ringside

at boxing matches with Warren Buffett. Go figure.

I do want to thank my court reporter, Sue DeVetter, who is over here taking all this down. There'll be a transcript of it. I take particular delight because this is a circumstance where she can't tell all of us to slow down when we're talking too fast.

All right. Our next speaker, ladies and gentlemen -- and thank you so much, Judge Gilbride -- Mary Kathryn Nagle. She is an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation.

She graduated summa cum laude from the Tulane Law School and then clerked for Judge Smith Camp and after that Judge Bataillon on our court. She also then clerked for Judge Benavides of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

She is a partner of Pipestem & Nagle Law, P.C., where she works to protect tribal sovereignty and the inherent right of Indian nations to protect their women and children from domestic violence and sexual assault. She is actively engaged in the movement to end the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, as well as the efforts to secure Violence Against Women Act reauthorization. She represents affected families and has testified before Congress on the matter as recently as March of 2019. She has authored numerous briefs in federal appellate courts, including the United States Supreme Court, and she is a frequent speaker on topics related to violence against Native women, the Violence Against Women

Act, the Indian Child Welfare Act, tribal sovereignty and federal Indian law.

Mary Kathryn has agreed to speak to us today, to be one of our final speakers.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. NAGLE: Thank you so much. It's an honor to be here. I want to thank Laurie's family, Lee and Jonathan and Abby, for letting me speak.

It would be hard to exaggerate the life and legacy of the Honorable Laurie Smith Camp. She was brilliant, full of integrity, humility and grace, and she had a sense of humor that matched, if not surpassed, her charm. She was an advocate, and she fought fiercely for what she believed in.

We have lost a federal judge, a mother, a sister, a companion, a mentor, a fighter for the rights of all marginalized peoples, but especially I admire the stands that she took for women and for Native Americans. It's been over a year since she passed, and not a day goes by that I do not think about her impact on my life.

She hired me to be her law clerk in 2008. I actually had the honor of clerking for both her and Judge Bataillon at the same time. I remember sitting with her during the interview and thinking, I am so intimidated! How can one person be so smart and so direct and so calculating and yet so beautiful and

so authentic? Never ever in my life had I met someone so accomplished and yet so humble.

My time clerking with her was one of the most formative experiences of my life. Like everyone she encounters, I benefitted from her mentorship and her guidance. I loved watching her in the courtroom. She treated everyone with respect, regardless of race, identity, socioeconomic status, and she controlled the room. She never had to be overbearing or aggressive in her courtroom because her very presence commanded respect.

So much can be said about this incredible woman that we miss.

At the time that Laurie attended Stanford University, the university admitted one woman for every two men. So once she was safely enrolled as a student, she went and had a conversation with the Dean of Admissions to ask him why a university so prestigious and so committed to diversity and inclusion were women being admitted at such a low ratio. The dean explained the university's founding documents and doctrines and papers and all these fancy things to her and explained that other groups had communities the university was trying to lift up but there was no synonymous community of women.

Laurie Smith Camp dedicated her life to building up and lifting up her community of women.

It was not lost on her that she graduated high school in 1971, the same year the United States Supreme Court decided *Reed vs. Reed*, a case wherein the Court concluded that the law could not allow administrators of estates to be appointed in ways that discriminated against women. This was hugely significant because it marked the first time in our United States history that the Supreme Court had ever declared that the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause applied to women. Prior to *Reed vs. Reed* in 1971, it was not unconstitutional to discriminate against women.

When she graduated from law school, most law firms would not even grant her an interview because she was a woman. She was told she could work as a legal secretary or if they did hire her she would have to sit in the back room, she could not engage with clients because no one could know that she was working for them.

Throughout her life, Laurie faced insurmountable discrimination, but that never stopped her. It propelled her forward with a velocity that approached the speed of light, because she was full of light.

In 1995, she was appointed to serve as the state's first female Deputy Attorney General in charge of criminal matters.

And in 2001, she became the first woman appointed to serve as a federal judge in the District of Nebraska. She was appointed by President George W. Bush and her nomination

received unanimous consent in the United States Senate. At the time of her confirmation, only 17 percent of federal district court judges were women.

There were many things that Laurie loved about her job but one thing she always cherished was her role in presiding over naturalization ceremonies at the courthouse. She held an incredible respect for the dedication of new U.S. citizens. The words that she offered at these ceremonies spoke volumes about her character. I as her law clerk cherished sitting and listening to them. I share just a few words from her remarks that she would give:

Nebraska's greatest author, Willa Cather, said: "The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman." Today, the history of America begins a new chapter in your hearts. You have chosen the United States of America as your country, and you have chosen to begin your new life as Americans in the heart of America -- the state of Nebraska.

Thank you for making these choices. America will be enriched by your citizenship.

My own grandfather immigrated to America from Ireland when he was 13 years old. His family rented farmland in Ireland, and when their crop failed one year, they were evicted. They were in debt and had no home. At that time, the Union Pacific Railroad advertised in Ireland, encouraging people to come to Nebraska. The Union Pacific needed workers. The advertisements said that Nebraska was the most beautiful and prosperous place in America, and had the best weather. For my grandfather and his family, Nebraska was a beautiful new home. I am grateful to the United States for the opportunities it has given me and my family over the years, and I have chosen to stay in Nebraska, although the Union Pacific may not have told the truth about the weather.

Many of us remember her because she mentored us. Her mentorship of me extended far beyond my clerkship. She would find any and every excuse to bring young lawyers, business professionals, artists, you name it, together in an effort to help us build connections. No one has worked as tirelessly as she has to help pave the way for the next generation.

After we lost her in September 2020, I searched through my emails, locating countless invitations:

On Sunday, July 21st, from 6:30 to 9:30, my house and yard will be stocked with food and beverages waiting for you. Some of you clerked or interned in the Smith Camp chambers. (Some of you moved out of state, but maybe you'll be in town.) Others of you have begun interesting careers in Omaha and may enjoy meeting other young professionals. This is a very casual come-and-go gathering. No need to RSVP. Please bring siblings (I don't have everyone's email address) and significant others. Babies are welcome too.

Or another example:

Friday, March 25th, from 4 p.m. until sundown, I will serve food and beverages at my home (216 Fairacres Road) to thank my current legal intern for his service, and to encourage others who have been associated with my chambers over the years (directly or tangentially) to refresh old friendships or make new ones. Because some of you now have small children, there will be Easter eggs in my back yard, and baskets for the hunters to fill. So please bring your babies and children and help provide the entertainment.

No need to RSVP. Come if you can with your significant other(s). And if you can't come, please know that I think of you often and wish you the best, always.

She held these gatherings to help us, the next generation.

I remember how excited she was to plan the Eighth Circuit Judicial Conference, to be held here in August of 2020. 2020 was a rough year for so many reasons, but not the least of which is that she had to cancel that conference. For over a year she was ecstatic because Justice Ginsburg had confirmed her attendance. Laurie had met Justice Ginsburg on several occasions and considered her a friend, a colleague, and a role model, if not a mentor. The Eighth Circuit Judicial Conference that Laurie was planning would celebrate the centennial of the 19th Amendment. And then COVID hit, and Laurie had to postpone the entire conference.

And then on September 18th, 2020, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away. Five days later, we lost Laurie. But in a radio interview that Laurie gave just three days before she herself passed, Laurie described Justice Ginsburg, stating, quote:

She sets an example for all of us of collegiality, civility, equal opportunity, and courage. She was unparalleled in her quiet steadfast courage.

Although Laurie would never agree or admit it, she was describing herself. She always went out of her way to support women. I remember she would share the quote of Madeline Albright that "there is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women." Well, we know Judge Smith Camp is in heaven because she spent her life helping countless women.

Five days after we lost Ruth Bader Ginsburg, we lost Laurie Smith Camp. And to be clear, RBG is not the only woman who sat on the federal bench and opened doors for the rest of us to follow. CNN and MSNBC may be talking about the notorious RBG, but it is upon all of us to educate the next generation about the indomitable LSC.

I loved her for so many reasons, not the least of which was her advocacy for Native people and Native nations. As a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, it meant the world to me to see a woman federal judge advocating and respecting the sovereignty of our tribal nations. She was a frequent speaker at the Standing Bear breakfast hosted by the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, and when I suggested to her and Judge Bataillon that we celebrate the 130th anniversary of the trial of Chief Standing Bear by performing a play that commemorates the trial, her only question was, "Well, which one?" and to which I responded, "Well, one that I will write," and she said, "I look forward to reading it."

She spent years advocating for recognition of Chief Standing Bear as one of our nation's first civil rights leaders and advocates. And when the play that we produced at the courthouse in 2009 was invited to the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in 2011, she worked with Senator Ben Nelson to extend a personal invitation to Justice Sonia Sotomayor. I read the letter she sent to Justice Sotomayor and

she told Justice Sotomayor that one of the greatest civil rights stories in the history of the United States happened in a federal courthouse in downtown Omaha, Nebraska. And she was right.

Laurie was always the ultimate connector. When we performed the play at the Smithsonian, she invited Jim Duff, then head of the prestigious Newseum, and before I knew it, we had an invitation to present the play at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., which we did, on December 12th, 2012.

Laurie supported me and my career all the way. When my play *Sovereignty* premiered at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., in January of 2018, she flew all the way to D.C. to be at the opening night. And when my children's play, *Return to Niobrara*, premiered here at the Rose Theater, she invited me to stay at her house in the "bunny room." Many of you know that room.

Ask any artist in Omaha, or around the world, for that matter, and they will tell you stories of how she supported the arts. From theaters to operas to museums to the Nebraska Shakespeare Festival to children's plays, she has served on boards of directors, donated money, time, energy and support to the arts.

She is, in her heart, a storyteller.

I miss her dearly every day. And I'm so honored to be here to speak of her with you all.

Thank you.

(Applause)

CHIEF JUDGE ROSSITER: Thank you.

We talked in our committee about a fourth speaker and we think we have arrived -- not to take anything away from our great speakers here today -- the perfect speaker to close this out.

On November 25th, 2013, Judge Smith Camp presented a TED Talk entitled "Wolves and Brownies." Many of you have seen it a number of times, like me; I never tire of watching it. Those who have not seen it are in for a treat. We felt that this captured the essence of Judge Smith Camp and that there was no better way to remember her and to close this memorial than to listen to Judge Smith Camp herself.

(The video presentation of the TEDx Talk "Wolves and Brownies" was played.)

(Applause)

CHIEF JUDGE ROSSITER: An amazing way to close this out. We do miss her, every one of us -- every one of us here.

Thank you for coming today. Thank you for those that came from distance. We appreciate it. I'm sure the family appreciates it. Our court appreciates it.

Camille will offer us another selection and then we will be finished. And we would invite you -- I think it's out -- up and out to the left, there'll be wine served and Senior Judge

Kopf will lead us in a toast to Judge Smith Camp.

Again, thank you for being here.

(Applause)

(Camille Metoyer Moten sang "Over the Rainbow.")

(Applause)

(Memorial Service concluded at 3:15 p.m.)