

## **Remarks at the Army Navy Country Club at luncheon honoring Justice John Paul Stevens**

On behalf of Janet and I, sincere thanks to Sue, Liz and Jay for the honor of sharing some thoughts today about life in Florida of this great man, whom I was privileged to call friend and neighbor, Justice John Paul Stevens.

An article in the Washington Post captured my attention the other day. The author correctly identified another contribution of Justice John Paul Stevens. Before the arrival of the millennials, he may be credited with creating and perfecting, the art of working from home. And home, for decades, has been the beach at Fort Lauderdale.

In retirement, and certainly after Maryann passed, John continued the senior life, just like every other nonagenarian or octogenarian you know -

Nine holes of golf – Monday and Saturday with Shaw.

An hour and a half of ping pong – Tuesdays and Thursdays with Steve.

A fierce bridge competition Wednesday and Friday – particularly enjoyable if Barbara, his favorite partner was available.

Sundays - a day of rest – so John waited patiently for both the Sunday Times and George Stephanopoulos to appear.

In between -

Visits to doctors, Winn Dixie, physical therapy. Always escorted by Dahlia, his dutiful and loving health care assistant.

Frequent dips in the ocean, presuming his helpers- John, Eileen, Stan or I were available to assist him in and out of the water.

A multi-year project preparing his memoirs and recently seeing them released to laudatory reviews.

A celebration with his former clerks just a few weeks ago. Carefully planned by John and Sue and executed at his club – his only pressing concern – “my signature is awful “But, when I suggested an electronic signature, he wouldn’t hear of it.

Conference and speaking engagements, often with a fellow Justice or two - Barcelona, Portugal, West Palm, Chicago, D.C., Atlanta. Meals with friends – fresh fish, all the better if caught that morning by Terry, stone crabs, a nice steak, and of course small plates at his favorite Italian spot, Angelo's with Michelle. Even the Sunday, before he passed, he graced us for a pasta dinner and a glass of wine and told us his stories, particularly about his recently concluded trip.

But, like most seniors, he had downtime

What was down time like for Justice Stevens? Feverishly reading through recent oral arguments – the documents spread across his dining room table ( it often was a challenge for Dahlia to find a spot on the table for dinner) books-one after another, puzzles, crosswords, The NY Times, Washington Post –The Miami Herald.

Regaling friends with stories, speaking with pride about his grandchildren's accomplishments, travels, or weddings. And each of you should know that he told us about those events often and with a great deal of pride. Managing his schedule through his able assistants - Janice and Peter and always aware of the watchful eye and loving concern of his daughters Sue and Liz.

Patiently waiting for the fall and Redskins football – this was always hard for me as a lifelong Giants fan, but John remained ever optimistic. Why? Because “they finally got a quarterback in Haskins and this will be their year.” I can't tell you how many times we heard that or how many quarterbacks we heard that about.

A man of insight, precise words, immense kindness and humble interventions – “May I ask a question?” His trademark interruption while on the court. But that was also his intervention at a restaurant when inquiring as to how the branzino was prepared.

A man of uncommon decency, integrity and manners. For many of us men at Plaza South, we both marveled and were challenged by those manners. How often I remarked – “John, you're killing us.”

He was beloved at Plaza South and would regale us with stories Babe Ruth – Ginger Rogers-Amelia Earhart–Charles Lindbergh- Camp David-his plane, the evolution of the bowtie. His neighbors dutifully waited for him to come to the beach to hear those stories. He'd sit and relax - some would pepper him with questions, or offer thoughts regarding the political climate in D.C. (as an aside

these past few years made for some – well let's say - lively interactions) But if conversations got too difficult or too pointed, it was amazing how his hearing aid suddenly would fail.

Several times we talked of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and the festivities that no doubt would accompany that event – interestingly, he always hesitated and would say “well I don't know about that”. Well I guess we know why now.

My fondest memory of John however is crystal clear and deeply personal. It was repeated many times over the years, whenever I accompanied him in and out of the ocean. As we concluded those dips he always stopped at the shoreline, looked up at me with those sparkling eyes and he would simply say – “success”.

Well John, what else should we say today? Maybe we should just cast our eye on the ocean, think of you and simply say -success.

*Nicholas Tortorella and his wife Janet lived next door to Justice Stevens in Fort Lauderdale. Nick is the Chief Operating Officer at Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel in New York.*