

Iowa Judges Association Memorial for Judge Annette Jennings Scieszinski

Judge Annette Jennings Scieszinski served as an Iowa District Court Judge from Judicial District 8A for over twenty years, from 1996 through 2016. She then served as a senior judge for an additional three years, up until just a few months before her death on February 26, 2021.

Judge Scieszinski was a judge's judge. She was exceptionally active as a judge, serving as President of the Iowa Judges Association and receiving the IJA's highest honor, the Award of Merit. On the national level, she attained the Chairmanship of the National Conference of State Trial Judges. She was a leader in judicial education with an emphasis in ethics, and presented at numerous judicial conferences during her tenure as a judge.

Judge Scieszinski's incredible work ethic, endlessly optimistic attitude, and sparkling smile are deeply missed by her colleagues and all who knew her.

Judge Annette Jennings Scieszinski was born on August 10, 1955, in Muscatine, Iowa, the eldest of five children. She grew up on the family farm near Winfield, Iowa. She graduated from Winfield-Mt. Union Community School in 1973 as the class valedictorian. Later she received her bachelor's degree from Iowa Wesleyan University, graduating summa cum laude. In 1980, Judge Scieszinski received her law degree from the University of Iowa, where she was a published author and editor of the Iowa Law Review.

While in law school, Judge Scieszinski met her best friend and soulmate, Dr. John Scieszinski. The two were married on August 12, 1979, and moved together to Albia, Iowa. Judge Scieszinski then started a law practice and was elected Monroe County Attorney, while Dr. Scieszinski opened his dental practice.

Over the years, Judge Scieszinski and her husband John welcomed four daughters: Lauren, Susan, Brooke, and Caroline, who became the

joy of their lives. Two of Judge Scieszinski's daughters are lawyers, and one is the currently serving Appanoose County Attorney.

Judge Scieszinski was appointed to the district court bench in 1996 by Governor Terry Branstad. She served the ten counties of Judicial District 8A with great diligence and outstanding leadership for over twenty years.

In addition to her judicial activities, Judge Scieszinski had many other interests, including a passion for art. Judge Scieszinski was an accomplished artist, focusing her award winning talents on oil painting. Several of her paintings were shown and won awards at the Iowa State Fair. Other paintings graced her judge's chambers in Albia.

Judge Scieszinski had a particular interest in mentoring and encouraging young people. She served as a 4-H leader for twenty-five years. She also served in various capacities over the years for the Iowa Law School and Drake University Law School. She was very active at her alma mater, Iowa Wesleyan University, where she served as the chairman of the Board of Trustees. Judge Scieszinski also encouraged and facilitated law students to be summer interns for the judicial branch over several years

Judge Scieszinski was always full of innovative ideas to improve the judicial branch and its "customer service." She started a column called "Court Calls" to be regularly published in the Ottumwa Courier. She encouraged other judges to create columns for this feature, and lent her editing skills to the endeavor. She chaired the 8A Public Outreach Committee for several years, where she encouraged judicial employees to engage in positive public relations opportunities for the district, including presenting at the "People's Law School" held at Indian Hills Community College in Ottumwa, Iowa. She was one of the first four judges to serve on the Business Court, and enjoyed the challenge of big litigation, including presiding over several environmental cases contesting hog confinement practices.

One of Judge Scieszinski's many natural aptitudes was nurturing others to be their best selves. Whether it was raising her daughters, or encouraging law students, or commiserating with her colleagues, anyone could count on Judge Scieszinski to offer wise advice, counsel, and support. She particularly relished spotting fine lawyers who would make excellent judges, and encouraging them to apply for open positions. She always made people believe that they could reach higher and do better. She helped to advance the careers of many, many young lawyers and older judges just by noticing, listening, and paying attention to their goals. She stood as a beacon for many who were inspired by the strength of her example of what is possible if you continually work hard and pursue your dreams.

Judge Scieszinski was a shining star of the judicial branch, whose light blazed brightly for many years, but whose light was extinguished way too early. She is survived by her mother Mae June Jennings of Winfield, Iowa, her husband Dr. John Scieszinski of Albia, Iowa, and her four daughters: Lauren Scieszinski of Kingston, Tennessee, Susan Scieszinski Cole of Centerville, Iowa, Brooke Scieszinski of Brooklyn New York, and Caroline Scieszinski of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. Her survivors also include four siblings: Dr. Cynthia Phillips of Agency, Iowa, Barbara Delaney of Cedar Falls, Iowa, Alvin Jennings of Iowa City, Iowa, and Gerald Jennings of Winfield, Iowa. She is further survived by four grandchildren: Emily, Paige, and Norah Bennett and Drake Daniels.

Judge Scieszinski is deeply missed by all who knew her. She is repeatedly referred to fondly by her colleagues as we remember who she was and all she stood for: leadership, intelligence, grace, compassion, style, wit, and rock solid integrity.

