



## Nancy C. Dreher

November 23, 2012

Dreher, Nancy C. Nancy Carol Dreher, United States Bankruptcy Judge for the District of Minnesota, may have been small in stature, but she had a big spirit- a natural leader, she succeeded in whatever challenges she undertook. Judge Dreher passed away at her Edina home on Friday, November 23, 2012, eight years after a double lung transplant, after a six month battle with bronchial infections and organ rejection. Judge Dreher was born in Racine, Wisconsin, on September 30, 1942, the first of five daughters of Pearl (Riedel) and Marshall Simonsen. She grew up in Kenosha and attended Mary D. Bradford High School, graduating first in her class in 1960. The first member of her family to attend college, she went to the University of Wisconsin in Madison and majored in Political Science. Because of her excellent academic record, she was admitted to law school as a senior. After her first year of law school she married Roger Dreher and joined him in Columbus, Georgia where he was stationed at Fort Benning. While there, she worked in the law offices of Col. Kearns, a retired JAG officer. They moved back to Madison in 1965, where, as one of only three women in her class, she completed her law degree in 1967, magna cum laude and first in her class. She was the Articles Editor of the Wisconsin Law Review, developing writing and editing skills that would reappear later in her career. Her next stop was San Francisco, where she was a law clerk for Chief Justice Traynor of the California Supreme Court. Roger completed his MBA at UC Berkeley during that year, and they came to Minneapolis in September, 1968. Judge Dreher practiced commercial litigation

law at Leonard Street and Deinard from 1969 to 1987 where she was the first woman attorney in that demanding practice area. In the early years, opposing counsel often thought she was a secretary, to their later chagrin as she out-lawyered them. Judge Dreher's leadership abilities were recognized throughout her career. She was appointed by Mayor Donald Fraser to head a committee studying internal disciplinary practices of the Minneapolis Police Department, and the Dreher Commission made many recommendations that were adopted by the department and the city government. In 1987, she applied for a vacant seat on the United States Bankruptcy Court, successfully competing against several dozen other candidates for the position. She was sworn in on January 25, 1988. Judge Dreher quickly became a highly respected jurist. She served from 1996 to 2005 on the newly created Bankruptcy Appellate Panel for the Eighth Circuit and helped establish it as an effective and prompt way to resolve difficult bankruptcy issues. She was reappointed for a second term in 2002 and served as Chief Judge from 2007 to 2011. U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist appointed her as the sole Bankruptcy Court representative on the Judicial Resources Committee, which establishes human resource policy for the federal judiciary. In 2001 he appointed her to a Federal Judicial Center committee for bankruptcy judge education. Judge Dreher became a leader in both Minnesota and national bankruptcy law and practice. In addition to her normal judicial duties, she mediated many matters for other judges, and trained many young lawyers who were her clerks in the bankruptcy law and general legal skills. Her major contributions to legal education included chairing or co-chairing the educational program committee for several annual meetings of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges and for the Federal Judicial Center. She was a Fellow and served on the boards of Regents and Directors of the American College of Bankruptcy and served on the board of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges. She was active in the American Bar Association and served for many years in the House of Delegates. She was a leader in the Minnesota State Bar Association, chairing several major

committees including the Glass Ceiling Task Force, strengthening the local Bankruptcy Section, and organizing many continuing legal education programs. She was instrumental in creating the Minnesota bankruptcy pro bono program that has become a model throughout the nation, and was utterly and steadfastly committed to assuring that those in need have adequate legal representation in bankruptcy court. She was also an adjunct professor of law at William Mitchell College of Law and University of Minnesota Law School. Her writing and publishing career included being Editor-in-Chief of the American Bankruptcy Law Journal, Editor-in-Chief of the monthly Bankruptcy Service Current Awareness Alert and co-author of the Bankruptcy Law Manual with fellow bankruptcy judge Joan Feeney. She wrote many scholarly articles on bankruptcy and pro bono topics. The Dreher's had two children: David in 1970 and Laura in 1975. From the time they were born, Judge Dreher showed that a woman can have a challenging career and be a good mom, too. And it wasn't all work and no play. Some of her favorite activities with family and friends included running (four marathons), downhill skiing (trips to Colorado and other venues), cross country skiing (Birkie and trails near Cable, WI), SCUBA diving (Honduras, Cozumel, Cayman Islands), travel (New Zealand, Europe, Russia, Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica and others). She loved movies both in the theater and at home, classical music, books about Presidents of the United States, Viking games, the Akumal beach, visiting the grandchildren, and being at the family cabin in Cable. Judge Dreher is survived by husband Roger; sisters Joan Koski of Bryan, TX, and Kim Weber of Montello, WI; son David (Amy) of Portland, OR and their children Anna and Eben; daughter Laura Timmel (Brian) of Western Springs, IL and their children Neve, Brennan, and Reid. Preceding her in death were sisters Diane Vaccarello of Kenosha, WI, and Roxane Crawford of Milwaukee, WI. A memorial celebration will be held on Monday, December 17, 2012 from 4 to 7 pm at Edina Country Club, 5100 Wooddale Avenue, Edina. Please come to share your stories and celebrate her life. Memorial gifts may be made

to Minnesota Medical Foundation, Center for Lung Research and Health, 200  
Oak Street SE, Suite 300, Minneapolis, MN 55455. Please, no flowers. [www.  
Washburn-McReavy.com](http://www.Washburn-McReavy.com) Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

# Previous Events

## Visitation

DEC 17. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Edina Country Club  
5100 Wooddale Avenue  
Edina, MN 55424

# Tribute Wall

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“ *My condolences to the family of Judge Nancy Dreher. I was a friend of Nancy's at Bradford High School in Kenosha. I always admired her strong work ethic and enthusiasm for life.*

*While she has passed, your memories are forever.*

*Sincerely,*

*Terry Rose*

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**Terry W. Rose** - December 03, 2012 at 03:23 PM