In Memoriam - International Banking Lawyer and Leader, Ron Rokosz

CHICAGO – Chapman and Cutler LLP mourns the loss of retired partner, colleague and friend Ronald E. Rokosz, who passed away at his Lake Barrington home on August 3, 2015. He was 71.

Ron Rokosz was born and raised in Chicago. He received his undergraduate degree (B.S., Political Science with emphasis on International Law and Politics), magna cum laude, from Loyola University of Chicago in 1966 and his law degree from Northwestern University School of Law in 1969, where he was a member of the Order of the Coif and on the Board of Editors of the Northwestern Law Review. He joined Chapman in 1969, became a partner in 1977, and was tour de force in Chapman’s banking practice. In developing the Firm’s international banking practice, Ron assisted foreign banks in all legal matters incident to having an office in Chicago. He was also instrumental in developing the market bank credit enhanced municipal bonds, helping the his foreign banking clients structure many of the earliest letter of credit-backed bond transactions. Additionally, Ron influenced the development of Chapman’s securitization practice, helping a Dutch bank develop an asset-backed commercial paper platform that became one of the largest in the world.

“I had the privilege of working with Ron for nearly 20 years,” noted Chapman’s Chief Executive Partner, Tim Mohan. “Ron developed our international banking practice, forming the Chicago branches of many of the world's largest banks. This work led directly to the development of the Firm's credit enhancement practice and a significant part of its securitization practice. Many of us owe our careers at Chapman to Ron's work and unfailing generosity with his client relationships. Ron was very proud of being a Chapman partner, and his belief in the capabilities of the Firm and its people was both genuine and contagious,” said Mohan. After nearly 40 years in practice, Rokosz retired in 2007. “Ron’s contributions to Chapman were immeasurable,” noted Mohan. “He will be greatly missed.”

“Ron was a mentor and role model, and due to his international banking expertise and his role as outside general counsel to the Chicago Branch of one of the largest Japanese banks operating in the United States in the 1980’s, he was critically important to the development of what is now the dominant legal practice in the representation of domestic and international banks in providing credit enhancement, liquidity facilities and other banking products to the public finance industry,” said Chapman partner Rick Cosgrove. “But most of all Ron was a dear friend whose brilliance and generosity inspired all of us at Chapman who had the privilege of working with him.”

Jim Spiotto, a retired Chapman partner and currently a Managing Director of Chapman Strategic Advisors LLC remembers: “Ron was always at the new frontier of the law where others would later travel. He was instrumental in establishing how to navigate licensing and regulation of foreign banks, effective methods to save failing companies for lender or supplier clients, assured repayment structures for new forms of financing such as cross border transactions, aircraft and securitization and sustainable sovereign debt restructuring where both lender and sovereign not only survive but were better off. Most of all, Ron did not mechanically apply the law but rather lived it as an art form. Ron was your best friend, your trusted confidant, the one who was there for you when you really needed it. We all will pass on, but Ron will live on in all of our memories for all he has done for all of us.”
Michael Maza, a Managing Director at SunTrust Robinson Humphrey noted, “Ron was my mentor in both business and life when I started in banking. His quality of character and outsized sense of humor was contagious. Not only was he a brilliant banking attorney, he was an incredible business partner who had that rare ability to balance the legal requirements with the business issues to ensure deals got done. He was an extraordinary lawyer, mentor and friend who helped so many teammates achieve great success. He will be missed by many of his friends and colleagues.”

Joe Rizzi, a former Managing Director of a Dutch bank and who worked closely with Rokosz, reflected: “Ron was a good lawyer, friend and most importantly, a good person. He will be missed by all who knew him.”

Personally, Ron had a love and gift for music. He took a few guitar lessons in high school, but quickly determined that he could learn faster on his own. He formed a band - The Royal Airs - with friends and played a variety of gigs (weddings, social gatherings, community events) throughout high school, college and law school. After retiring from Chapman, Ron taught himself to play the piano and in three years time could play almost any popular song an audience would request. He was an avid traveler - exploring the United States and Europe extensively with this wife and family.

Ron is survived by his wife, Kathleen; son, Christopher; and grandchildren, Amanda and Ashley.

About Chapman and Cutler
Chapman and Cutler LLP is a national law firm with a practice that is focused on financial services transactions and clients. Founded in 1913, the firm has more than 235 attorneys with offices in Chicago, New York City, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. For more information, please visit chapman.com.

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