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Acceptance Remarks

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ACCEPTANCE REMARKS

*Keith J. Shapiro**

Thank you Dean Schapiro and the exceptional Journal staff for this very kind recognition.

Everyone has something that they can look back on, good or bad, which launched them in the direction they ended up taking during their lives. For me, that has been Emory University School of Law and my experience as a member of its *Emory Bankruptcy Developments Journal*.

I arrived at Emory Law School in 1980, fresh out of undergrad with a finance degree and sure of only one thing—that I wasn't ready to get a job and could use three years to think about what I wanted to do. I was fascinated by the financial world and thought that perhaps I could learn to handle mergers and acquisitions or perhaps securities and commodities regulation.

During my second year of law school I learned that Emory Law School had just started the first law journal in the country focused on bankruptcy law. The journal was the brainchild of legendary Georgia Bankruptcy Judge and Emory Law School alumnus William L. Norton, Jr., and was originally named the *Annual Survey of Bankruptcy Law*. I did not know a thing about bankruptcy law, neither was I aware that just a couple years earlier Congress had transformed a law from 1898 into a modern statute. The new law would make bankruptcy law a major practice area for every corporate law firm in America for the first time. I was always a good writer and thought that a journal would look good on my resume, so I applied and was accepted.

The first case I was asked to write about was authored by Judge Ralph Mabey in Utah, who went on to achieve legendary status as a judge and practitioner. It was as though lightning had struck. This bankruptcy world was all about finance and wheeling and dealing, and that was my comfort zone. I was hooked.

* Keith J. Shapiro is the Vice President of Greenberg Traurig. He is also the Chairman of the Chicago office, National Chairman of Strategic Recruitment and Co-Chair of the firm's Business Reorganization & Financial Restructuring Practice. He serves as Alumni Advisor to the *Emory Bankruptcy Developments Journal*.

As I prepared to exit law school, I learned that bankruptcy judges, who until just a few years earlier were known as Referees, had been given the ability to hire law clerks like other federal judges. It was a pleasant surprise to learn that the *Bankruptcy Developments Journal* (as the *Emory Bankruptcy Developments Journal* was then known) credential caught the attention of many bankruptcy judges across the country. My wife Marci and I had no money at the time—I spent part of my law school years hitchhiking to class and didn't buy books during my third year, instead opting to use the library's copy to save money—so I only accepted interviews within driving distance of Emory or my home in Chicago.

I was fortunate to land a clerkship with a kind and infinitely wise jurist, Judge Richard N. DeGunther, in Rockford, a small northern Illinois industrial town surrounded by farm country. I was amazed by the transformative impact that writing for the Journal provided; it gave me direction and helped me land my first job. A year later I once again saw the power of my Emory experience when I began interviewing with Chicago law firms. The Journal experience, combined with my clerkship and Judge DeGunther's stellar reputation, had given me the credentials to be an attractive candidate with many top law firms.

I tend to be a very sentimental guy. I could never get over the foresight of Emory Law School to step out front and provide its students with both experience and a powerful resume credential in an emerging area of the law. This area changed and enriched my life in such a profound way.

The fascinating cases I've been fortunate enough to work on, the amazing friends I have made, the privilege to serve as President and Chairman of the American Bankruptcy Institute and on the Boards of INSOL International¹ and the Turnaround Management Association, and the springboard to become a leader in one of the world's great law firms, Greenberg Traurig—all are directly traceable to the halls of Emory Law School.

When put in that context, I am sure you can understand why I became involved as the *Journal's* Alumni Advisor many years ago and why I felt compelled in 2000 to establish annual writing awards with cash stipends for the top authors of the *Emory Bankruptcy Developments Journal*. As I learned so clearly, one credential on a resume can change a person's life. I hope that the Shapiro Bankruptcy Writing Award has had that kind of impact on some of the students who have received it over the past fifteen years.

¹ International Association of Restructuring, Insolvency & Bankruptcy Professionals.

I sincerely thank the leadership and faculty of Emory University School of Law for always striving to deliver practical training and experience to their students. I thank you for supporting this Journal in such a consistent and meaningful way over the past thirty years. It is hard to imagine that any law school has trained more bankruptcy lawyers and law clerks across the United States over the past thirty years than Emory Law School. I know that the bankruptcy bench and bar are indebted to Emory Law School for its contributions.

And thank you to Georgia's bankruptcy judges, bankruptcy lawyers, and financial advisory firms for supporting this important annual event and for welcoming so many Emory Law School students into your firms over the years. May Emory Law School and the *Emory Bankruptcy Developments Journal* go from strength to strength.