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Tribute to Barbara Salken

Michelle Simon*

Barbara Salken was a wonderful teacher, colleague, friend and mentor. Others today will talk about what a skillful and dedicated teacher she was and what a spirited colleague she was. I'd like to take a few moments to share with you the role she served for many of us as a friend and a mentor. She was there for every celebration—our babies, our birthdays and our career decisions. She spent hours organizing our parties, offering her house for every gathering, bringing us together as friends instead of coworkers. She knitted sweaters for our babies—I'm lucky enough to have two—shared her gardening and cooking tips, her joy over the building of her front porch. She shared her class notes, including all the jokes that she told to her students, read the drafts of our articles as we were working our way towards tenure, guided our careers and answered our questions. She gave us advice about Bar Mitzvahs, arranged the furniture in our offices and was the best source of faculty gossip that I think I will ever meet. She shared her fierce love of Billy and of Matt, and of Leo, the importance of family, her pride in all their accomplishments. When I needed a memo that was ten years old I went to Barbara. When I was trying to decide when to get tenure I went to Barbara. When I needed advice about whether to allow my daughter to dye her hair purple I went to Barbara and she, of course, told me to go right ahead and let her. When I needed a corkscrew I went to Barbara. When I needed a voice I went to Barbara. I look for her every day. I see her in the halls, her footsteps making prints in every crevice. I see her coming into my office at twelve noon sharp to tell me it's time to go down to lunch. I see her sitting in front of me at faculty meetings where I could kick her chair when the discussion began to get exceptionally frustrating. I see her in the Legal Aid show standing next to me singing her part out as

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loudly as she could and laughing because she couldn't carry a tune. Like so many of my colleagues, I look for her every day and every day, forever, I see her.

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