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HER HONOUR JUDGE CORINNE PHILPOTT QC

Lord Chief Justice,

Both you and the Learned Recorder have paid tribute to Her Honour Judge Philpott QC as a much loved and esteemed judicial colleague. As Chairman of the Bar, and on behalf of the entire Bar, I pay tribute to our much loved and sorely missed sister, Corinne.

She was undoubtedly a fine Judge. But before her elevation to the County Court Bench, she was an eminent practitioner in our Bar Library. The Bar was her life and she contributed greatly to the life of the Bar. She met David, her soul mate and the love of her life, when they were both beginning to forge successful careers at the Bar. They became a Bar family. She succeeded in overcoming all the challenges associated with being a highly successful working mother at the Bar. Her fine son Christopher is a testament to that.

David and Christopher, Corinne was a cherished member of our Bar family. You, David, our brother at the Bar, are held in the highest regard by all in this packed Court. When the time is right, I hope you will be able to return to your practice and immerse yourself in the place that meant so much to both you and Corinne. We here are your professional family. That is one of the many strengths of the Bar. We share in your grief. We wish to support and comfort you and share your burden and we will help you cope with the grievous loss you presently bear with such quiet and noble dignity.

Corinne Philpott was called to the Bar in the Michaelmas Term of 1977 and her Master was one Richard McLaughlin, later to become Mr Justice McLaughlin. Corinne was an enthusiastic and energetic pupil and like all good pupils she studied and adopted many of the fine traits of her Master, copying his sophisticated sartorial elegance and his reserved manner.

In her early years at the Bar, in addition to meeting her future husband, she developed what proved to be many life long and close friendships at the Bar. I am reliably informed by my esteemed predecessor, Mr Brian Fee QC, a veritable and priceless repository of Bar lore, that Corinne used to drive a little red Citroen box car when she started at the Bar and she gave many lifts to and from the Petty Sessions Courts' of Johnny Adams and Johnny Edwards to terrified passengers including the said Mr Fee. The terror was apparently induced by the fact that, and I quote Mr Fee: "she talked nonstop, took her hands off wheel and rarely looked at the road ahead." The animated discourse did not stop when Corinne got out of her little red Citroen. She had many lively exchanges with, and more than held her own in front of, Messrs Adams and Edwards, two of the most formidable presences in the Magistrates' Courts of the time.

At around this time, her good friend Cathy Donnelly encouraged her to take up tennis. It would seem that she wasn't a natural at the game but with her usual determination and a lot of lessons from a very patient coach at Windsor Tennis Club, she became a feared opponent on the tennis court.

But it was not only on the tennis court that she was seen as a formidable opponent. Her practice flourished and she, in turn, took on the role of mentor to other younger female members of the Bar. Her pupils included Laurine McAlpine, now a senior official in the Department of Justice, Colette Bowman McAllister, a much respected family lawyer, now sadly retired, and the baby of the bunch, the far from retiring Ms Grainne Murphy.

Laurine McAlpine remembers that Corinne loved what she was doing and embraced the work with ease. During her pupillage, Laurine was very much

aware of Corinne's passion for her work in which there could be no half measures. Even after she took up a post in the Civil Service, Laurine remembers that her former Master remained a source of advice to her throughout her career and she will always remember her with gratitude and fondness.

Grainne Murphy had this to say about her former Master:

"We were introduced to each other by Alva Brangam, who thought that the personalities would work. He was right. Having been warned by Taylor Campbell that Corinne did not suffer fools gladly, I tried to keep in step with my Master, despite the early morning starts. I soon learned when to ask questions and when to say nothing. I watched Corinne represent, advise and advocate on behalf of her criminal and matrimonial clients. A fiercely sharp cross examiner and at times harsh with her own clients as she gave them much needed reality checks, she fought for each client with passion and vigour and treated each client with humanity and compassion. They knew she cared about their case. Her ability to read cases or her clients was fascinating to watch."

In addition to devoting herself to her family, her work at the Bar and her pupils, Corinne devoted herself to promoting the interests of the Bar in general and promoting equality in the Bar. You have heard how she was Vice Chair of the Bar Council and she was the first Junior Barrister and first female Counsel to hold that post. She was also Chair of the Professional Conduct Committee during this period. After her term as Vice Chair came to an end, she remained a member of the Bar Council until 1997. She was only the second female Barrister in Northern Ireland to be appointed a Queen's Counsel and that was in 1993. Between 1993 and 1998 she sat regularly as a Deputy County Court Judge. She was a founder member of the Family Bar Association and she was the Inaugural Chair of the Guardian Ad Litem Agency between 1996 and 1998 and a Board Member of Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Association during the same period.

We have already heard how in April, 1998, Corinne became the first woman to be appointed to the County Court Bench in Northern Ireland. During her time as Recorder of Londonderry between 2002 and 2008, she was pivotal in organising and fundraising for the first contact centre in the Family Care Centre in that city. If that was not enough, she was the External Examiner at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies between 2002 and 2004 and she was made a Bencher of the Inn of Court in 2005. All the while between 1996 and 2015 she remained an active and dedicated member of the Executive Council. In 2012 she was appointed Deputy Recorder of Belfast. I repeat this detail because it is worth emphasising that despite her heavy judicial workload, Judge Philpott always had time for the Bar and dedicated herself to maintaining and indeed promoting the improvement of standards at the Bar.

When members of the Bar are elevated to the Bench it is often said that their likes will not be seen again at the Bar and that they leave a void that will never be filled and in Corinne's case these statements are undoubtedly true. She was a truly remarkable individual. All who practiced at the Bar with her can testify to that and those who were called to the Bar after her elevation to the Bench and who appeared in her Court were also exposed to that remarkable personality.

The passing of our esteemed former colleague, Her Honour Judge Corinne Philpott QC has brought deep sadness to the Bar of Northern Ireland. Judge Philpott was a quite simply a remarkable pioneer of the legal profession. From her days both at the Bar and more recently on the Bench, we remember her tireless enthusiasm, her generosity of spirit, her sense of humour, her deep sense of humanity, her courage in the face of her illness, and her unfailing commitment to serve the interests of justice and her community. She was a wonderfully emotional woman, who never held back from displaying her emotions. She had the kindest of hearts. She will be keenly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing her. On behalf of the Bar Council, of whom she was a former Vice Chair, and on behalf of all the Bar, I offer my deepest sympathy to you, David and Christopher, her

husband and son. She loved you both so dearly, and she never tired of telling others of that undoubted fact.

Gerry McAlinden QC

22nd June, 2016.