

We mourn the passing of our esteemed colleague and friend Gerard “Jerry” Fernandez, Jr.

04.21.2023

With scores of others throughout the industry, we mourn the passing of our esteemed colleague and friend Gerard “Jerry” Fernandez, Jr. who died peacefully on April 21, 2023. The municipal bond community lost a true gentleman and scholar, and we express our heartfelt condolences to Jerry’s family and his many friends.

A life-long resident of Long Island, Jerry recently moved to Florida to be close to his family upon retirement.

Our partner Bob Smith, who worked with Jerry for many years, said of him, “In addition to his many accomplishments as an attorney, Jerry was also noted for being a man of integrity and good character. He always had a kind word to say to attorneys and staff at the firm. Those are the qualities many of us admired the most about him.”

Jerry worked at Hawkins for almost 67 years, and he was sought after by colleagues not only for his counsel but also for his sense of humor. He was a friend to everyone he met.

Jerry joined our firm as an associate in 1950, after serving in the U.S. Navy as a lieutenant (JG) in the Pacific during World War II. He became a partner in the firm in 1960 and remained Of Counsel to the firm from 1998 until 2017.

During his long and storied career at Hawkins, Jerry was instrumental in designing the intricate relationship between New York State and New York City in the 1960s. Among his many accomplishments, he played a significant role in the creation of the Battery Park City Authority, drafted the legislation that created the New York City Housing Development Corporation, and drafted both the Maine Health and Higher Educational Facilities Authority and the Maine Municipal Bond Bank enabling legislation. While his experience was vast, in later years, Jerry focused his practice on New York local government bonds. The success of his efforts will benefit many generations to come.

Arthur Cohen, a partner at the firm, said, “Jerry Fernandez was both a part of, and a major contributor to, the history of Hawkins. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of relevant statutes and case law, and played an important role in the development of many of the financing structures that are commonplace today. Throughout his very long career, he maintained an avid interest and intellectual curiosity in all aspects of public finance, and was a mentor to government officials, bankers, lawyers and all of the other members of our industry. He will be missed by all of us at Hawkins, for his wise counsel and his kind friendship.”

Members of this firm as well as those in the municipal industry knew Jerry as an innovator in the public finance industry.

In remembering Jerry, our partner Howard Zucker recalled attending a bond insurer’s annual conference as a young partner. “I went down to the reception on the lawn of a very nice hotel and saw a long line of people. I wondered why they were all lining up, so I walked to the head of the line and saw that the long line was to say hello to Jerry and pay respects to him. I told him that I was very impressed to see so many accomplished people standing in line to see him. Jerry leaned over and whispered in my ear, ‘it also helps to stand in front of the shrimp bowl.’ He could be very funny and self-deprecating, which was part of his great charm.”

Jerry is survived by his son, Bruce Fernandez, as well as many close family members and friends. He was preceded in death by Beverly, his wife of 68 years.

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He was a friend to everyone he met. It was our honor to work with such a kind, intelligent and dedicated colleague. He will be sorely missed.