

In Memoriam — Gary O. Cohen

August 28, 2024

With profound sadness, we announce the death of our beloved colleague, Gary O. Cohen, at age 87, on August 27, 2024, after a brief illness. Gary was a native of Nashville, Tennessee, and attended Vanderbilt University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, in 1959. He went on to obtain his Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School in 1963. Gifted with intelligence and wit, Gary delighted many with his countless legal conference presentations that often began with a scene from a Marx Brothers film, communicated in his signature lyrical way with a soft Tennessee drawl. He would carry entertaining references to the scene throughout his presentation. Gary began his legal career at the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington, D.C., where he served for five years, some of that time as assistant chief counsel in the Division of Investment Management, the division that regulates investment companies, investment advisers, and life insurance company products. During his time at the SEC, the U.S. Supreme Court held that variable annuities were subject to SEC jurisdiction, and he participated in the development of the SEC's regulatory regime for variable insurance products. Gary moved on to private practice in Washington, D.C., first with the law firm of Freedman, Levy, Kroll & Simonds, and later with other firms (but with most of the same group of colleagues), including, for the past 10 years, Carlton Fields. Among many important groundbreaking initiatives, he played a crucial role on behalf of the insurance industry in developing the terms and conditions under which the SEC would permit the offer and sale of the first variable life insurance policies and in opposing challenges brought by opponents of such policies. Throughout his legal career, he also represented mutual funds, including independent directors and trustees. A prolific writer, Gary authored numerous articles on SEC regulation of investment companies and other securities law matters for a variety of prominent publications. He also appeared as an expert witness on such matters in federal court cases. Aside from his outstanding legal career, Gary was a Renaissance man who collected art, studied art, created art, and went on art-focused vacations around the world. He was in Europe this summer on one such art trip when stricken with maladies that ultimately ended his life. He was a frequent theatergoer, keeping up with the theater scene (and the art scene) in New York City where he maintained a second residence. Gary is survived by his loving wife and partner in life, Jean Lawlor Cohen, two daughters, Allison Cohen Marvin (Chris) and Emily Cohen Moyer, several grandchildren, his brother, Gibby Cohen (Patti), and numerous friends and colleagues.

