

Longtime Chicago defense attorney Mitchell Goldgehn dies at 95

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Longtime defense attorney [Mitchell S. Goldgehn](#) — known among his friends and colleagues as “Mickey” — is being remembered as a respected litigator and generous mentor to many in the legal community.

Goldgehn, 95, died Sept. 26.

He was a named partner at [Aronberg Goldgehn Davis & Garmisa](#), where he worked for nearly five decades, focusing on insurance defense and insurance coverage. He joined the firm, the third oldest in Chicago, in 1983.

[John C. Sciacotta](#), who also works at Aronberg Goldgehn, said Goldgehn was the “whole package” and “everything you want in a senior partner.”

“When you think of what a lawyer should be, I think Mickey was a great example to everyone on how to conduct yourself and behave as a lawyer,” Sciacotta said. “That is what I will always remember and cherish from my relationship with him. I feel that anyone that came in contact with him or had a relationship with him was fortunate to have him in their life.”

Sciacotta and Goldgehn bonded over their alma mater — [DePaul University College of Law](#), where Goldgehn graduated in 1953.

Sciacotta said that Goldgehn was committed to clients, but he was equally committed to everyone at the firm.

“And not just the lawyers, but the staff, the people in the mail room,” Sciacotta said. “He felt the firm was a family and that is the way we are ... mostly because of how Mickey treated people.”

Throughout his career, Goldgehn handled major commercial lawsuits on behalf of a variety of clients, including banks, manufacturers, telecommunications carriers, computer service companies, title insurers, developers, industrialists and publishers.

He has also acted as a supervising and coordinating counsel in a number of mass tort litigation matters, including breast implant, polybutylene pipe and lead paint coverage cases.

Goldgehn presented oral arguments before the Illinois Appellate Court, the [Illinois Supreme Court](#) and the [7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals](#).

He was part of several landmark decisions.

Goldgehn represented [Allstate Insurance Co.](#) in *Travelers Insurance Co. v. Eljer Manufacturing, Inc.* 197 Ill. 2d 278 (2001).

In that case, the Illinois Supreme Court held that the mere installation of a defective plumbing system did not, within the meaning of a comprehensive general liability insurance policy, constitute “physical injury to tangible property” unless and until the system leaked.

This decision expressly overruled an Illinois Appellate Court decision that had been the law in the state for more than a decade, court documents showed.

In another case, Goldgehn represented the [Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago](#) in *First National Bank in Harvey v. Colonial Bank* 898 F. Supp. 1220 (N.D. Ill. 1995), a federal commercial lawsuit involving a check-kiting bank fraud scheme.

The case concerned the strict liability of payor banks under the Uniform Commercial Code for missing the “midnight deadline” to return checks.

The [U.S. District Court for the Northern District](#) of Illinois held that missing the midnight deadline imposes strict accountability on the payor bank, regardless of whether negligence or a check-kiting scheme was involved, and actual loss is not required for the depository bank to recover.

Goldgehn’s team obtained summary judgment in favor of their client, shielding it from extensive financial liability from the underlying bank fraud.

Goldgehn was also involved in the legal community through membership in several bar associations, including the [American Bar Association](#), [Chicago Bar Association](#), [Illinois State Bar Association](#) and [7th Circuit Bar Association](#), as well as the [Defense Research Institute](#), Federal Trial Bar and Illinois Association of Defense Trial Lawyers.

Aside from the law firm, which bears his name, Sciacotta said Goldgehn’s legacy will be his commitment to making the legal profession better and inspiring and mentoring the next generation of lawyers.

“Every time we do something, I think many of us will ask ‘what would Mickey do,’” Sciacotta said. “And I think that is the greatest admiration you could have for somebody.”



Mitchell S. Goldgehn