

ROBERT SWIFT – LONG BIOGRAPHY

Robert Swift is a pioneer in human rights litigation. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he attended Haverford College and New York University Law School. Prior to starting his legal career, he was a tennis professional and served in the Army infantry in Viet Nam during that War. Shortly after graduating law school, he authored a legal treatise on labor law published by the University of Pennsylvania. In later years, he authored articles and book chapters on human rights.

In 1973 he joined the law firm which today bears his name: Kohn, Swift & Graf, P.C. Unlike most trial lawyers, he tries jury and non-jury cases throughout the United States, not just in his home city. In the field of complex litigation, Mr. Swift litigated numerous cases both at the trial and appellate levels. In 1988 he successfully argued the first Superfund case in the United States Supreme Court, winning in a 5-4 decision.

His filing of a human rights case against the deposed President of the Philippines, Ferdinand E. Marcos, on behalf of 10,000 victims of torture, summary execution and disappearance, was groundbreaking. It was the first time a court ever certified a human rights class action. After a hotly contested trial, a jury in Hawaii eventually awarded the class almost \$2 billion. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed. Collection of the money hidden by Marcos proved to be an odyssey. In 2008 Mr. Swift argued his second case in the Supreme Court, this time a fight with the Philippine Government over whether \$35 million of Marcos money belonged to the Government or the human rights victims. It was the first human rights case ever argued in the Supreme Court. Eventually he did recover millions of dollars of Marcos assets and personally distributed the money to class members in the Philippines in 2011. That marked the first time human rights victims in Asia had ever received compensation.

In 1996 Mr. Swift filed litigation on behalf of Holocaust victims who perished during World War II and whose deposits in Swiss banks were never returned. Two years later he signed an historic settlement agreement with Swiss banks in which they paid compensation of \$1.25 billion to the victims. Subsequent litigation he brought against German and Austrian corporations, banks and insurance companies on behalf of Holocaust victims produced settlements of over \$6 billion.

Mr. Swift's work was recognized by his peers on numerous occasions both locally and nationally. In 1995, the *National Law Journal* named him one of the 10 best trial attorneys in the United States. He was finalist for the Trial Lawyer of the Year Award given by the *National Law Journal* in 2000.

Despite his heavy trial and travel schedule, he relished promoting nonprofit organizations. He served on the Board of Managers of Haverford College, his *alma mater*, for a dozen years. He served as Chairman for 8 years of Arthur Ashe Youth Tennis and Education and was instrumental in the construction of that group's \$13 million 7-acre youth tennis facility in Fairmount Park. The Intercollegiate Tennis Association presented Swift with its lifetime achievement award at the U.S. Open in New York, calling him "one of the leading trial lawyers of his generation."

