

**THE HONORABLE MARY ELLEN BENSON ABRECHT  
ASSOCIATE JUDGE  
SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

On September 14, 1990, Mary Ellen Benson Abrecht was sworn in as an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. She is currently serving part-time as a Senior Judge.

Judge Abrecht was born in Massachusetts and attended public schools until entering Mount Holyoke College. After earning her B.A. degree in 1967 with a major in religion, she did one year of graduate study in religion at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Following her marriage in 1968, she moved to Washington, D.C. and worked as a substitute teacher in elementary schools in Anacostia.

Mary Ellen Abrecht joined the Metropolitan Police Department in December of 1968, and became an investigator in the Youth Division. She earned a Certificate in the Administration of Justice from American University in 1970. As Policewomen's Coordinator in 1971 and 1972, she assisted the Department in eliminating sex discrimination in the hiring and assignment of women. From September 1972 until March 1975, she served as a Patrol Sergeant in the inner city Third District. She attended Georgetown University Law Center part-time and received her law degree in 1974.

From 1975 to 1990, Judge Abrecht was as Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Columbia. She gained extensive experience as a trial attorney and as an appellate attorney. She held several supervisory positions including Deputy Executive Assistant to the U.S. Attorney Charles F. C. Ruff, Deputy Chief of the Grand Jury/Intake Section of the Superior Court Division, Deputy Chief of the Appellate Division, and Training Director. She received Special Achievement Awards for Sustained Superior Performance in 1980, 1984 and 1989. In 1988, she received the National Director's Award for Outstanding Achievement in a Managerial Role. Judge Abrecht has also served on the Legal Ethics Committee of the D.C. Bar from 1988 to 1990.

On the Court, Judge Abrecht has served in all the major Divisions. Her first assignment was to the Family Division. In that Division in 1990 and 1991, Judge Abrecht handled neglect and abuse cases and delinquency cases. In 1996, Judge Abrecht was again assigned to the Family Division, spending three months on domestic violence cases and six months on termination of parental rights cases and adoption matters. In 1999, she served as Deputy Presiding Judge of the Family Division. Throughout 1999, 2000, and 2001 she handled divorce and custody disputes.

Judge Abrecht served in the Civil Division during 1994, 1995, and 2002. She presided over civil trials involving matters such as automobile collisions, medical malpractice, landlord and tenant disputes and employment discrimination. As a Senior judge, as needed, she handles Tax Forfeiture cases, traffic appeals and sits as Judge in Chambers.

Judge Abrecht has also served extensively in the Criminal Division. From January 1992 through December 1993, Judge Abrecht presided over misdemeanor trials and felony trials. In October 1996, Judge Abrecht returned to the Criminal Division and through December 1998 presided over many high-profile Felony I trials involving first-degree murder or rape. In January 1998, she presided over a murder case for which (for the first time in Superior Court) the courtroom was equipped with a computer into which over a hundred of photographic exhibits had been scanned so that such exhibits could be viewed from monitors throughout the courtroom and enlarged or marked as needed. Beginning in 2003, she has handled misdemeanor traffic cases and domestic violence cases as needed.

Judge Abrecht was a member of the Bryant Inn of the American Inns of Court from 1990-2005 and served as president from 1997 to 1999. Judge Abrecht has been on the Board of Directors of the Council for Court Excellence since 1999 and a Barrister since 2001. She sings in a choir, is a member of the Capitol Hill Art League and occasionally exhibits drawings at the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop.

She and her husband Gary Lorne Abrecht (who retired in 2000 after over thirty years in law enforcement including eight years as Chief of Police, United States Capitol Police) have two adult daughters--Karen Tompros, a teacher in Massachusetts, and Rachel, a Mechanical Engineer in Connecticut. Gary and Mary Ellen Abrecht have lived on Capitol Hill for over 35 years in a house built in 1905 for her great-grandfather.

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