

## Harry C. Benford III

OF COUNSEL

Handling estates ranging from \$300,000 to \$30 million, Harry Benford has practiced a highly personal level of estate management for 40 years, serving Evanston and the North Shore. Thousands of Chicago-area residents have benefited from his guidance, most notably through education and disability trusts. Anyone who knows Harry even slightly or who has had the pleasure of a house call from him understands why he regularly receives invitations to weddings and other celebrations, family gatherings where more than one generation of clients are likely to assemble. Raised in Appalachia, educated at Harvard, Harry says "this alpha and omega of experience" has enabled him "to relate to nearly every type of personality." He prides himself on being ordinary, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Growing up in southwestern Pennsylvania following World War II, he worked in the open-hearth furnaces and was a member of the United Steelworkers back when the mills ran 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. Harry remembers one Christmas Eve when his steelworker father had to work the graveyard shift, compelling his mother to lament to her son, "To call your life your own, become a lawyer."



### CONTACT INFO

---

DIRECT 312 565.8334  
FAX 312 565.8300  
E-MAIL [hbenford@SRCattorneys.com](mailto:hbenford@SRCattorneys.com)

### PRACTICE AREAS

---

Estate Planning and Administration

Trusts

Wealth and Health Planning



To get along in the steel mill towns where he lived, Harry picked up a smattering of Czech, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian and Welch—languages he heard daily in the backyards, playgrounds and mills of his youth. A shop steward at Bethlehem Steel’s Rolling Mills the day he left for college, Harry later occupied the same dormitory floor as a Rockefeller—a dose of culture shock. Harry says wealth and privilege dominated higher education during the 1950s and the great social movements—which he continues to champion—were still a generation away. His later social awareness explains why overhearing a dean reprimand a female for taking up space “better reserved for a male student” disturbed Harry profoundly (approximately five of his 515 classmates at Harvard Law School were women). Given Harry’s melting-pot background, it angered him, also, that only graduates of Ivy League colleges could join certain clubs, not working class or minority students (what few there were).

After law school—as expected of men from Appalachia—Harry joined the army. A private first class and machine gunner with the 26th Infantry Division, he was commissioned as an officer in 1967 and remained in the reserves for 23 years, most notably serving as the legal liaison with military police battalions during the civil disturbances of the 1960s. He patrolled the streets of Chicago during protests in neighboring Cicero and riots in Douglas Park. Standing guard on Roosevelt Road at 2:00 a.m. one night, he watched a police sedan cruise to a halt as a man in the passenger seat leaned out to say: “You’re on God’s business tonight, Captain. His blessing to you and your men.” Then Martin Luther King, Jr., reached his arm out the window and shook Harry’s hand.

Harry would have another encounter related to Dr. King, but under much more tragic circumstances. A day after Dr. King was assassinated in April 1968, the south and west sides of Chicago erupted in riots and fire. He patrolled the streets for two weeks with 12,000 troops from the 33rd Division while the First Armored Division rolled through the south side and the Fifth Mechanized Infantry remained in reserve at Glenview. Harry returned to the streets in August 1968 when the Democratic Convention nominated Hubert Humphrey as its candidate for president and when police and Vietnam War protestors clashed in Grant Park.

**EXPERIENCE**

Schuyler, Roche & Crisham, P.C.  
Chicago | Evanston, Illinois

*Of Counsel*  
2005 to Present

*Shareholder*  
1985 to 2005

Tenney & Bentley  
Evanston, Illinois

*Partner*  
1980 to 1985

Shanesy, Hobbs, Koch, Benford & Ball\*  
Evanston, Illinois

*Partner*  
1968 to 1980

*Associate*  
1963 to 1968

*\*And predecessor.*

**EDUCATION AND  
DISTINCTIONS**

LL.B., Harvard Law School, Cambridge,  
Massachusetts, 1961.

B.A., Cum Laude, University of Pittsburgh,  
Pennsylvania, 1958.

Lieutenant Colonel (retired), Illinois Army  
National Guard; United States Army Reserve,  
1961 to 1985.

What does this background have to do with practicing law today? A lot, says Harry. Bearing witness to strife as soldier, peacekeeper and unionized laborer, Harry acquired skills he did not learn in law school: namely, to consider a situation from a variety of perspectives and to relate to people from all walks of life. As a result, he is the consummate family counselor, the trusted person called when a problem arises. As one client noted to a family member, "This may not be Harry's specialty, but describe your situation, and he'll introduce you to the right lawyer for the job."

Harry began practicing law in 1961 at a boutique firm on Chicago's North Shore specializing in estate planning, trust administration and wills. The only associate in a three-person firm, he handled a broad spectrum of family law—from adoptions to divorce, bankruptcy to real estate. He eventually narrowed his focus to estate management exclusively. In 1985, sensitive to the sweeping changes in technology and their effect on the legal profession, he and a colleague approached Schuyler, Roche & Crisham about opening an office in Evanston under their leadership and Schuyler, Roche & Crisham's name to offer their growing North Shore clientele the technological resources available through our firm. Harry says they had targeted Schuyler, Roche & Crisham because our firm demonstrated early respect for new technologies and was among the first law firms to operate like a business, employing efficiencies calculated to help a company run smoothly. He joined us at our downtown address early in 2002 to work more closely with our Estate Management team, which he expertly helped build.

A fixture at civic affairs in Evanston and Chicago, Harry lends his considerable charm and expertise to a variety of worthy causes. His avocations are as diverse as his civic contributions. He is a student of military history, particularly of World War II, and of Native American history, especially fascinated by the tribes of the Great Plains and Eastern Woodlands. He also is a collector of military memorabilia and a wildlife photographer, principally of birds. Harry currently is assembling a photo album of Anasazi and Mogollon petroglyphs from the American Southwest, intent on preserving what is left of these national treasures before they vanish, cut from canyon walls by rapacious collectors.

#### PEER RECOGNITION

Leading Lawyers Network, Law Bulletin Publishing Company, 2005 and 2006.

Martindale-Hubbell, "peer review rated for ethical standards and legal ability," since 2002.

#### BAR AND COURT ADMISSIONS

Illinois, 1963

United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, General Bar, 1963

#### PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Illinois State Bar Association

Chicago Bar Association

Chicago Estate Planning Council

Harvard Law Association of Illinois

## AREAS OF PRACTICE

The irony is not lost on Harry that as a steelworker-turned-attorney, he is managing millions of dollars of other peoples' money; estate management, however, complements his pursuit of equality. In creating personalized estate plans, Harry has helped clients to educate their children, to manage property during periods of disability, to protect loved ones from financial and emotional difficulties and to minimize federal estate taxes, probate expenses and costs of administration.

Harry's mission has never changed: to give each client the same focus and attention. Over the years, his clients have included a cross-section of a strong community: college professors, entrepreneurs, police officers, construction workers, real estate developers, doctors, nurses, cab drivers, fleet owners, executives, secretaries, musicians, playwrights, authors—even screen writers (one of whom won an Oscar). In short, no matter what a client's financial worth, Harry helps the client profit from his or her life's earnings. Harry's areas of expertise include:

- estate planning
- estate and trust administration
- probate
- elder law
- trust litigation
- will contests
- trusts for people with disabilities—his groundbreaking legal work
- living trusts
- irrevocable insurance trusts
- charitable gifts
- trusts for *last-to-die* policies covering the lives of both a husband and wife.

Harry also has served numerous fiduciaries, both corporate and individual, regarding estate and trust administration and related litigation. In addition, he has represented fiduciaries, devisees and legatees in litigation relating to will construction and trust and estate administration.

## CIVIC AFFILIATIONS

Rotary Club of Evanston; member, 1967 to present; president, 1975 to 1976; director, 2000 to 2001.

Evanston Citizens' Police Committee, 1980 to present.

Washington National Insurance Company Separate Account One, director, 1985 to 1995.

Evanston Historical Society, director, 1988 to 1992.

Salvation Army of Evanston, director, 1986 to 1989.

University Club of Evanston, president, 1985 to 1986 and 1988 to 1989.

First Federal Savings and Loan of Chicago, advisory director, 1979 to 1981.

Evanston Public Library, counsel, 1977 to 1980.

Evanston Chamber of Commerce, counsel, 1966 to 1980.

American Cancer Society, director, 1975 to 1979.

Evanston Federal Savings and Loan Association, director, 1970 to 1979.

Chicago Crime Commission, 1970 to 1974.

Family Welfare Association, director, 1966 to 1969.

In his role as family counselor, Harry has handled such real estate matters as:

- representing the sellers of the current site of the Doubletree Inn, an office towers development directly south of Old Orchard Center, a shopping mall
- handling sales of many Evanston properties and developments, including the retail strip on Main Street and Custer Avenue and the major retail strip along Evanston's Sherman Avenue shopping district
- clearing the title to a commercial property in Evanston that had not had a title examination since the 1890s, a monumental endeavor considering that more than 100 years of activity on this historic property had left the title with numerous and difficult exceptions
- representing the seller of a custom coating factory in Evanston whose principal account was the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, for which this factory coated materials used on the space shuttles
- arranging zoning for a major high-rise office building in downtown Evanston.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

In Harry's multifaceted life, it is difficult to single out any one highlight. Nevertheless, his groundbreaking work creating trusts to ensure security for people with disabilities is worth illuminating. In creating such trusts—a labor of love for Harry, who originally was motivated to provide for the needs of a close family member—he avoids any claims that would deplete the trust's assets by sheltering those assets from government and municipal authorities. His satisfaction is complete, he says, when he sees the relief in parents' eyes after learning a trust he has created will provide for their child throughout the child's life. On the other hand, Harry finds it impossible to quantify the feeling of achievement after visiting an institution or facility following the death of both parents, his intent being to verify the quality of their child's care.