

## Man of 'undaunted courage'



At the funeral for former U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, his wife, Joan Specter, embraces a granddaughter. The service was held at Penn Valley's Har Zion Temple. DAVID SWANSON / Staff Photographer

# Specter is remembered as seeker of fairness, justice

By Kathy Boccella  
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Former U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter was eulogized Tuesday as a man of grit and determination who, in the words of ex-Gov. Ed Rendell, did more for Pennsylvania than even Benjamin Franklin.

From Vice President Biden to two of Specter's granddaughters, a parade of speakers told the

overflow crowd of mourners at Penn Valley's Har Zion Temple moving and sometimes funny stories of Specter's 82-year life and his political and personal pursuits for justice, fairness, and common ground in an increasingly polarized America.

And at the end of the nearly two-hour service, Specter's fierce independence was

summed up with a song that played while his casket was carried from the sanctuary to a hearse: Frank Sinatra's "My Way." Specter's four granddaughters wept as they followed the flag-draped coffin of

See **SPECTER** on A4

■ **Karen Heller:** Rare species: A Republican moderate. **A2.**

# The last of his moderate, combative political kind

With a mere three weeks before the election, Joe Biden gave up campaigning in the battlegrounds of Colorado and Nevada Tuesday to remember his Senate Judiciary Committee and Amtrak pal, Arlen Specter.

"I thought, 'What would Arlen do?' Arlen wouldn't have even thought about it. Arlen would have been there for me," the vice president told almost 1,500 mourners at Penn Valley's Har Zion Temple.

Biden recalled how Specter continually pushed him. "I don't know why I did so much for Philadelphia. Arlen would say 'Remember, you're Pennsylvania's third senator,' and like a sucker I bought it." During their decades on the committee, Biden said, "I never met more damn Philadelphia judges."

President Obama declared a national day of mourning, with all flags on federal buildings flying at half staff. Hard to think of any other Pennsylvania politician meriting such

## INSIGHTS



Karen Heller

an honor. Actually, impossible.

For a man who was so often solitary and utterly defiant in his political tendencies, Specter attracted a packed house, a who's who of power: governors, senators, university presidents, and boardroom chiefs and those many, many Philadelphia judges.

Few public figures fought cancer harder, physically and fiscally, than Specter, 82, who on Sunday lost his third battle with the disease.

Among his many achievements, good and less than good, the single-bullet theory, "Borking" the Supreme Court nominee, grilling Anita Hill,

and curating the federal bench in Philadelphia and elsewhere, Specter's greatest legacy may be championing the National Institutes of Health. From 1999 to 2004, he and Iowa Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin helped double its budget.

Three years ago, Specter brokered a staggering \$10 billion in NIH appropriations, a 34 percent increase, in return for his backing of Obama's stimulus package. His was arguably the most expensive vote in the nation's history.

As one of three Republicans to support the president, Specter "probably knew he was signing his political death warrant," said former Gov. Ed Rendell, who landed his first job with the two-term Philadelphia district attorney. "Was it worth risking his political life? Yes, it was."

That massive research funding is the senator's true gift to our country. Shanin Specter said that when cancer is finally conquered, his father "will be counted among the righteous who made it happen."

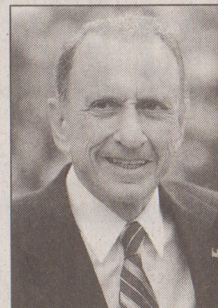
For a politician who angered conservatives, women, conspiracy theorists, Republicans, Democrats — really, almost everyone at some point during his career — Specter remained that rarest, now endangered, species: the Republican moderate.

He was the maddening moderate, fierce the most common adjectives uttered at his funeral. He was a fighter physically on the squash court, against Hodgkin's disease, against a brain tumor, and cardiac arrest after bypass surgery. Rendell recalled visiting Specter recently and thinking, "He's as feisty and ornery as ever."

Though Specter had a reputation as one of Washington's most tyrannical senators — he routinely ranked among "the meanest" bosses in Washingtonian magazine polls —

several hundred former staffers attended the funeral, many in tears. As one aide told me, working for Specter gave her "the best six years of

my life." Specter hired staff regardless of party affiliation — a good thing since he switched twice. When he was D.A., Specter had no idea that Rendell, his homicide chief, was a Democrat.



Arlen Specter would have stayed in the Senate till death had his party not left him.

Arlen Specter adored politics. He would have remained in the Senate until his death had the Republican Par-

ty not left him. Stephen Harmelin, his former campaign manager and treasurer on several campaigns, now co-chair of the Dilworth Paxson law firm, said he could imagine Specter "looking out at a crowd of this size and wondering how he could turn this

into a fund-raiser."

Specter was irascible, often impossible, yet indelible. Consider this: For three decades, a man from the only Jewish family in Russell, Kan., who never lost that distinct drawl, represented Pennsylvania in Washington. He could recite the commonwealth's 67 counties in his sleep. Here was a Republican who supported abortion rights and stem-cell research. He was a squash-playing, martini-swilling, joke-telling Philadelphia resident in a state that doesn't take too kindly to our city. Yet Pennsylvanians elected him five times to represent them.

In a political era of self-financed millionaires, PAC-backed conservatives, and folks born into powerful families, will such a political anomaly ever happen again?

No, it will not.

We will not see the likes of Arlen Specter again.

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