

**The Honorable Robert V. Franklin, Jr.**, is remembered in the Toledo legal community for his decades of distinguished service to our judiciary. He was a mentor to many in our profession, and was recognized by his peers in 1987 as the senior member of the Bar who gave most unselfishly of his time, talents, and energies to assist young lawyers. He was also a volunteer leader in dozens of community and civic organizations.

He lived a life of service to others. Volunteering despite many other responsibilities "was based in his upbringing from his mother, his Christian upbringing," his son Gary said, "and the admonition to give back to your fellow man, that you just don't go out and get what you can for yourself. You're part of the community and should act accordingly."

If Judge Franklin were here he might say, "You may be just one person in this world, but to one person, at one time, you are the world. Imagine if each individual looked for the opportunity to help others each day. Imagine the difference that would make."

Although his list of accomplishments and honors is extraordinary, his innate humility would direct us to pay tribute to him posthumously by paying tribute to those who helped him; his beloved wife Kathryn, his teachers and classmates at Morehouse College, his colleagues on the bench and in the bar, and his countless friends. Judge Franklin was a true friend to many.

His friend and longtime court reporter Rose Cannon, reflecting on Judge Franklin's life was reminded of the lyrics to "If I Can Help Somebody":

If I can help somebody, as I pass along,  
If I can cheer somebody, with a word or song,  
If I can show somebody, how they're travelling wrong,  
Then my living shall not be in vain.

If I can do my duty, as a good man ought,  
If I can bring back beauty, to a world up wrought,  
If I can spread love's message, as the Master taught,  
Then my living shall not be in vain.

"I am just so indebted to the contributions he made that opened doors to me," said Charles Doneghy, who followed Judge Franklin on the Municipal Court bench, retiring in December, 2010, as a Common Pleas Court judge. "He was an outstanding jurist. He had a lot of firsts."

Judge Franklin was generous with his counsel when Judge Doneghy was appointed to the Common Pleas Court bench. But Judge Doneghy's education began years earlier, when he was a county assistant prosecutor. "You learned he ran a very strict courtroom," Judge Doneghy said. "That standard made you well prepared when you worked in his courtroom."

Judge Franklin was firm, fair, and consistent, said Alan Konop. ". . . He treated people with a great deal of courtesy," Mr. Konop said. "He thought very deeply about what he should do in terms of sentencing and his rulings during a trial. He was a man of great integrity."

A Toledo native, he was a graduate of Scott High School and Morehouse College, Atlanta, where Martin Luther King, Jr., was in the class a year behind him. He was a graduate of the University of Toledo College Of Law. He was an Army sergeant in the Korean War. He returned from his service to a law practice with J. Slater Gibson and William N. Thomas. He was a former Toledo city prosecutor and a former assistant city law director.

In retirement, Judge Franklin sat regularly, by appointment of the Ohio Supreme Court, as a visiting judge in courts around the state. For a time in the 1990s, he monitored and coordinated the Lucas County Common Pleas Court asbestos docket. The late Thomas Moyer, chief justice of the Ohio Supreme Court, said then, "If every judge were like Judge Franklin, we wouldn't have any worries about the judicial system."

There were four groups of people who were most dear to Judge Franklin, his family, his fellowship in the Third Baptist Church, his fraternal brotherhood in the Boule of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, and his alma mater Morehouse.

He loved to laugh. His laughter, accentuated by his bobbing shoulders, was infectious. He was a gifted speaker and story teller. His friend Judge Doneghy recalls that he had a stock of jokes he knew quite well.

He was personable -- an "everyday kind of person," Judge Doneghy said. He met people in the traffic lanes of life; whether in his aisle seats at UT basketball games, with the Old Newsboys, working in his yard, at the bowling alley or on the golf course; and from the Courtroom to the Board Room. Everywhere he met people he shared (mostly by example) a life philosophy engrained in him by Morehouse President and lifelong personal advisor Dr. Benjamin Mays: "It is not your environment, it is you -- the quality of your mind, the integrity of your soul, and the determination of your will -- that will decide your future and shape your life."