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Personal Tribute to Honorable Frank X. Altimari

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PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO HONORABLE FRANK X. ALTIMARI

Honorable Thomas J. Meskill¹

I first met Frank Altimari in the early 1980s when I visited the Brooklyn Federal Courthouse and Frank was an Eastern District Court Judge. It was not until 1985 that I really became acquainted with this remarkable man. Perhaps because we had similar religious and political blue collar backgrounds, we became close friends. Frank was completely open and unguarded in expressing his views about life and the law. He was delightfully frank. You knew where he stood on every issue under discussion. I do not mean to imply that Frank shot from the hip. He didn't. He decided cases only after careful study of the record and the briefs and after listening to oral argument. Frank was an active participant during oral argument, questioning the adversaries at length, not just to help him arrive at the right decision, but always thinking ahead to how to explain the Court's reasoning if it developed that he was to author the opinion of the Court.

Frank's experience as a trial lawyer and his service on the Nassau County Courts prepared him well for his work as a District Judge and his lengthy service as a Circuit Judge. He was a delightful colleague. We shared many good times together, both on and off the bench, both in New York and in Florida.

Judge Altimari's greatest frustration was seeing a litigant with what appeared to be a meritorious claim deprived of a remedy because of some procedural bar. He would strive mightily to keep this from happening. He had a very big and generous heart. He loved his family, his God and the law. He took such pride in his children and talked often of his 11 grandchildren. When late in life his latent talent as a sculptor surfaced, his joy overflowed. Unfortunately, this budding artistic endeavor was cut short by illness, as was his distinguished and valued service as a Senior United States Circuit Judge.

¹ Judge, United States Court of Appeals, Second Circuit.

My great regret is that I was en route to Alaska the day Frank Altimari died and was unable to attend the services in his honor. I only learned of Frank's death a week later when I returned to Connecticut. With Frank's passing, our Court lost a distinguished Judge and I lost a good friend. I miss him a lot.