

**TRIBUTE
TO
THE HONORABLE JOHN F. GERRY**

*Honorable Robert B. Kugler**

It is difficult to write of Chief Judge John F. Gerry in the past tense. The memories are still so fresh, the images so strong. Our paths first crossed over thirty years ago. He was a successful lawyer; I was just a kid. What struck me then, as it did everyone before and since, was his outgoing manner, his wit and charm, and his obvious delight in being with people. He was no “stuffed shirt.”

A supernatural power obviously intervened in my life, for Judge Gerry was somehow persuaded to accept me as one of his law clerks. Thus followed my most rewarding legal experiences. Of course, things were a lot different then. We didn't have word processors or computers. We did legal research by actually looking at books, and we wrote bench memoranda long hand with those miserable little government issue pens. Nevertheless, it was great.

We communicated by actually talking to each other, and what conversations they were. Judge Gerry had an uncanny knack of divining the motive behind the application or motion. He knew the lawyers and their strategies. When he tired of law and lawyers, and even with his great patience he tired of it, there was always baseball.

In those days, he was a trial judge. He took the “trial” part seriously. Some of my fondest memories are of Judge Gerry coming off the bench and into chambers, robe flowing behind him, huddling with his law clerks and staff over some thorny problem he faced in court. Now that I look back, it's obvious he knew the answer all along. There was no need to consult anyone else, but he wanted us to be a part of the process, to feel that our opinions mattered.

His courtroom demeanor was remarkable. Using his legendary wit and humor, he defused those tense situations we'd all like to avoid. He understood better than most that everyone who came to the United States District Court deserved respect, no matter what their station in life or what crime they were alleged to have committed. Time and again, litigants left his court feeling they had a fair hearing, regardless of the outcome.

Such was my first exposure to the legal system. It was pretty heady stuff for a new lawyer to be a part of the Gerry court. He made us all better

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lawyers. More important, he made us all better people. We all miss this remarkable man. Every judge, lawyer, or litigant whose heart he touched will never forget him.