

**TRIBUTE
TO
HONORABLE JOHN F. GERRY**

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Earlier this year, the editorial in the *New Jersey Lawyer* was a tribute to Judge Gerry: "His gentle, but trenchant, observations on life and the law reflect only one small jewel in the judicial crown of a magnificent jurist and human being."¹ There are many jewels in his judicial crown including his judicial wisdom, his sensitive, compassionate treatment of each litigant and each lawyer appearing in his courtroom, and his unequalled wit. The jewel I want to describe is how he involved the bar, through the Lawyers Advisory Committee ("LAC"), as a vital part of the federal court in New Jersey.

In 1983, a committee of lawyers and judges was formed to revise the local rules of the federal court. In our dozen or so meetings, I experienced Judge Gerry's concern for making the practice of law more efficient, less difficult and, of paramount interest to him, more enjoyable. He knew that the job of practicing law was getting tougher without adding the burden of cumbersome local rules on top of existing federal rules. His caution, time and time again was to do what's best for the litigants and for the court, without forgetting the lawyers; and, he didn't forget the lawyers when he became chief eight years ago. When the rules committee evolved into the LAC, he broadened our group to include the criminal defense bar and the public defender; he increased the lawyer membership while appointing lawyers from throughout the state — from big firms, small firms, sole practitioners and government; he referred all disciplinary complaints to the LAC for investigation and, if necessary, prosecution. He emphasized to us over and over again that we need not be unduly influenced by our judicial members, insisting that when we did vote on an issue, the judges had not voted.

Judge Gerry had nationwide duties delegated directly to him by the Chief Justice. He had his daily trial court duties and the administrative burdens of the district's chief. But he never forgot the lawyers while encouraging each lawyer member of LAC to do what was best for the administration of justice in the beloved United States District Court for the District of New Jersey.

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¹New Jersey Lawyer Editorial Board, *John F. Gerry, Chief of Chiefs*, 4 N.J.L.J. 6, (January 2, 1995).

Today, the LAC, a group of judges and lawyers, is a vital adjunct to the court. Under Judge Gerry's guidance and at times friendly orders, lawyers have helped the court shape some of its plans and policies.

Judge Gerry said of his dear pal, Jim Hunter, at the dedication in Camden of the Judge Hunter Library, "We can only hope that maybe in some quiet moment there may come to each of us, or some of us, or one of us, a grudging and faintly audible 'well done.'"²

I know that thoughtful lawyers throughout New Jersey join me not in a grudging, faintly audible tribute, but in this sincere and loud message to our beloved friend:

"In our quiet moments, we shall never forget you."

²John F. Gerry, Address at Dedication of Judge Hunter Library at Camden, New Jersey (November 10, 1994).