

1994

Memorial Service, Judge Justin J. Mahoney

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Recommended Citation

Miner '56, Roger J., "Memorial Service, Judge Justin J. Mahoney" (1994). *Judges*. 9.
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MEMORIAL SERVICE
JUDGE JUSTIN J. MAHONEY
October 27, 1994

We meet today to honor the memory of our friend and colleague, Justin J. Mahoney. We meet in the presence of the family that he loved and that loved him. We meet to remember a man of great character, of great ability, of great loyalty, and of great integrity.

When I first came to this Courthouse to serve as a District Judge thirteen years ago, I was taken in hand by Jim Foley, who remained my mentor until the day of his death. "Do you know anything about bankruptcy law?" he asked. "Not very much," I replied. "Well, you are in luck," said Jim, "because all you have to do is affirm the decisions of Justin Mahoney." Jim said: "Justin is never reversed." As with all things, I accepted Jim Foley's advice, and I never regretted it. Jim also frequently praised Justin Mahoney as a handicapper of horses, but I cannot speak with authority on that subject. But, then, neither could Jim Foley.

Justin and Jim were great friends, and I frequently found them together, shooting the breeze in Jim's chambers, Justin leaning forward in his chair with the ever-present cigarette burning between his fingers, and Jim sitting behind his desk with his chair tilted sideways facing Justin. They were just two hometown boys from Troy, and what a great pair they were. Justin was a very easy person to talk to, despite the fact that he told a lot of Bobby Kennedy stories. Whenever I ran into him in this Courthouse, or outside on the sidewalk, the natural tendency was to stop and chat. He was interested in everything, curious and

sympathetic, kind and compassionate. I guess that is what made him a wonderful Judge and a wonderful man.

Justin Mahoney was the perfect Bankruptcy Judge because he approached the arcane world of bankruptcy law with a feeling of great concern for the people who were caught up in its intricacies. He sympathized with the plight of debtors, great and small, and realized that his assistance was essential in straightening out their affairs and their lives. During the twenty-five years that he served here as Bankruptcy Judge, including nine years as Chief Bankruptcy Judge, he gained the high respect and admiration of all the lawyers and litigants who appeared before him. One attorney was quoted as saying: "He treated everyone in his court with the utmost respect and dignity." Another said: "There are not enough good things that anyone could say about him."

The Second Circuit Court of Appeals, the Court upon which I am privileged to serve, will soon appoint a successor to the office held by Justin Mahoney. The Committee of attorneys chosen to make recommendations to us has submitted a list of fine candidates for our consideration. My colleagues and I will meet to select one of those candidates as the most worthy to serve as Bankruptcy Judge in the Northern District. It is my fervent hope that the person we choose will look to Justin Mahoney as the star by which he or she will guide his or her course as a Judge of the Court. Justin set the standard for others to strive to attain -- a standard that is informed by the qualities of wisdom, compassion, learning, common-sense, fairness, humanity, mercy, faith and love. We cannot replace him; we can only appoint his successor. He will be missed.