

Memorial

for

Judge John D. McGill

(1920 - 1972)

DISTRICT COURT
Winona County
Winona, Minnesota

Winona County Bar Association
April 17, 1972

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY OF WINONA

DISTRICT COURT
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT

In the Matter of the Memorial
for Judge John D. McGill.

The above-entitled matter came on before the Honorable Glenn E. Kelley in the District Courtroom, Winona County Court House, Winona, Minnesota, at 10:00 A. M., April 17, 1972.

THE COURT: Mrs. Torgerson, as President of the Winona County Bar Association, I understand you have a matter to be brought to the attention of the Court at this time?

MRS. TORGERSON: Yes, Your Honor I would like to introduce Mr. Robert Hull who is chairman of our Memorial Committee for Judge John D. McGill who died February 27, 1972, who will present a Memorial on behalf of the Winona County Bar Association.

Mr. Hull: Thank you, Mrs. Torgerson. Your Honor, Mrs. McGill, and members of the Bar Association:

On February 27, 1972, at the age of 51, Winona Municipal Court Judge John D. McGill died in Rochester, Minnesota. Judge McGill was born in St. Paul on June 10, 1920, to John and Rose Kukowska McGill. He married Doris Sinell on November 26, 1949 in Le Sueur, Minnesota. He left surviving his wife, Doris, three sons, Daniel, Charles and Timothy, and three daughters, Jane, Joan Ella and Sara. Also surviving him was his brother, William McGill of Clinton, Tennessee. His mother and father had preceded him in death.

Judge McGill had lived in Winona for 49 years. He was a

graduate of Cotter High School and attended Winona State College as well as Seattle College, Seattle, Washington. He graduated in 1948 from the St. Paul College of Law, receiving an LLB Degree. He was admitted to the Bar of the State of Minnesota in 1948. Immediately thereafter he served as librarian of the United States Court of Appeals Library in St. Paul. He then practiced law for one year in New York Mills, Minnesota, before returning to Winona to open a law practice on May 3, 1950.

Judge McGill was representative in the State Legislature in 1952 to 1962. He was a candidate for the U. S. House of Representatives in 1958. He was appointed Municipal Judge in Winona Municipal Court on June 24, 1963, by Governor Karl Rolvaag. He was elected to this office in 1965 and then re-elected on December 7, 1971.

Judge McGill was a member of the Winona County Bar Association, the Minnesota State Bar Association, the Minnesota Municipal Judges Association, Winona Elks Club, Winona Athletic Club and its Benevolent Association, the Red Men and its 24-Hour Club, the Winona Eagles Club of which he was Secretary and a past President and the Winona Odd Fellows Club of which he was President.

Physically Judge McGill was never a well man. He suffered from a heart ailment all of his life which he never disclosed or discussed with his friends or acquaintances until it became rather obvious. He underwent heart surgery in 1969 at Mayo Clinic in Rochester. For a short period of time he felt the pleasures of complete health but then he underwent cancer surgery. In August of 1971, Judge McGill was told that cancer had recurred and it was incurable. He, however, went to the Curie Pavilion in Rochester and underwent every experimental treatment possible. He continued to keep his problems to himself and refused to let anyone accompany him on his visits for treatments. John explained to his family that he did not want anyone to treat him differently than in the past and he feared that if his friends knew

about his condition their attitudes toward him necessarily would change. The same criterion applied to all relatives except his immediate family. His relatives were not aware until a week before his death that his end was near. He did, of course, tell his immediate family what to expect but did his utmost to keep them living a normal life. He continued to take his children on trips every Sunday. The day before his death, he insisted on taking his family to a basketball game in which his son was playing. On the day of his death, he sent his daughter to perform in a baton contest near Rochester. It was only after she had left he consented to have an ambulance called.

A memorial is not complete unless we point out the message that has been left to us by the life of Judge John D. McGill. I think the message of John's life is quite clear, and especially meaningful to members of the legal profession. It is easy for a lawyer burdened with the hectic turmoil of problems faced in the legal practice to ignore and overlook the problems of our fellow man. We become quite self-centered and feel that the burdens of the world rest on our shoulders. Friendliness, yes, even happiness becomes a thing of the past. We forget the old adage, "no matter how bad things are for us, they are much worse for someone else." As with John D. McGill, those that have it the worst are the very ones that are able to keep their personal problems to themselves, ask for no sympathy, and still be one of the more apparent happy individuals. He met one and all with a smile and a handshake. His family and friends have loving memories of a man who did not give up and kept his sense of humor to the end. The message of John's life is clear — in spite of all one's personal problems, we should not become so submerged in them that we fail to reach out to our fellow man with a happy welcome and a smile to help make his daily load seem somewhat lighter, to place the welfare and happiness of our families ahead of ourselves and above all to assess and face up to our own personal problems meeting them head-on without a whimper but with fortitude.

Judge John D. McGill was an honored and respected member of the Winona County Bar Association and the members of the association request that this memorial be entered in the records of District Court of the Third Judicial District of Minnesota in honor of his memory and that a copy hereof be sent to his widow, Doris McGill. Thank you, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Hull. Your comments were extremely appropriate. The reporter is directed to transcribe his notes of these proceedings and deliver a copy thereof to the Clerk of Court who is directed to duplicate the same on the records of the court and to send a certified copy thereof to the widow and family of the late Honorable John McGill.

Dated this 17th day of April, 1972 at Winona, Minnesota.

Donald W. Blake
Official Court Reporter
Third Judicial District
Winona, Minnesota

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