

IN MEMORIAM

MILO FRELING STEVENS

(May 27, 1893 – August 18, 1944)

Hennepin County Bar Association
Minneapolis, Minnesota
February 1, 1945

MILO FREILING STEVENS

1893 -1944

Milo F. Stevens was born in Red Wing, Minnesota, May 27, 1893, the son of Freiling H. Stevens and Mary Bowen Stevens, both of whom predeceased him. In 1900 the family moved to Minneapolis, where his father and uncle Herbert H. Stevens had theretofore organized the law firm of Stevens and Stevens. Milo grew up in the atmosphere of the law, His father and uncle built for themselves and their firm name an enviable reputation.

Milo, at the age of seven, came to Minneapolis and grew up a typical Minneapolis boy. He graduated from Calhoun Grade School and West High. For a time he tried to build for himself a career outside the law but his family environment, his justifiable respect and admiration for his father, and his natural aptitude for the law finally impelled him to launch upon that career and in 1923 he graduated from the Minnesota College of Law with honors. His prompt admission to the Bar made him an active member of the firm that still bears his name.

Milo F. Stevens was in the true sense a real lawyer. He always practiced an unbending devotion to his profession. Unquestionable honesty was the keystone to of his character — constantly displayed in all his dealings with his clients, the courts and his opponents. Above all else, he was a great student of the law — literally a walking encyclopedia of case and statute law. His astounding memory enabled him to find the law with ease, if it existed, applicable to almost any state of facts. No case was ever more thoroughly prepared than one he had prepared ready for trial. As an example of his studious nature, it was his habit, without exception, to observe the action of a legislative session. He read and digested every law as soon as passed, and as soon as available after a session closed he had his private copy of the Minnesota Statutes annotated and every new statute catalogued. He was never an ostentatious practitioner but I venture to say no lawyer gave his clients better or more sound legal advice. He practiced to keep his clients out of court, rather than to get them into court. His office work was done with meticulous care. His pleadings, his contracts, his legal documents were precise, clear and entire. He rarely overlooked anything that was important to

or necessary for his client. He stamped himself as a valuable lawyer by never permitting work to grow stale in his office. He gave equal devotion to the lucrative and the unlucrative business of his clients. He was never known to turn away business of his clients because it was small, or to him unimportant.

He was an active and ardent member of the Hennepin County and State Bar Associations. His work there was characterized by his anxiety to keep the profession honorable and upright. He took as a personal offense any lay ridicule of the law, the bench or bar. He was uncompromising in his resentment against any lawyer charged or found guilty of unethical conduct. He was a credit to our profession.

Without warning or premonition he died suddenly in the early morning of August 18, 1944, at the age of 51 years. He is survived by his widow Helen W. Stevens; Two sons Robert L Stevens, 29 years, of St. Louis Park, Lieut. Trevor W. Stevens, 25 years, in the Army Air Corps; one daughter Marilyn Stevens, 21 years; two grandsons; and a brother Harold A. Stevens, a lawyer and sole survivor of the firm of Stevens and Stevens.

Mile F, Stevens was as valuable a citizen as he was a lawyer. For twenty years prior to his death he was a resident of St. Louis Park. He assumed to owe a duty to the community in which he lived that was coexistent with citizenship. He believed that a community was only as healthy and strong as the individual members thereof. Consequently, he accepted that duty freely and worked diligently at the business of being a citizen of St. Louis Park. He loved that village, and all its residents; they, in turn, loved and respected him. He was an honored member of their School Board for many years and served as President of that Board. He was Chairman of the Charter Commission of St. Louis Park and is credited by his colleagues on that Commission with having done much in formulating the provisions of that Charter and securing its adoption. He was an active member and aided in the formation of the St. Louis Park Civilian Defense Council. He was for many years the village attorney of St. Louis Park, and at the time of his death he was the attorney for the village School Board, As a member of Paul Revere Lodge No. 321 A. F. & A. M. of St. Louis Park, he rose to become its Master, and in connection with his Masonic activities he later became a 32° Mason.

As a man, Milo Stevens was genuinely “human,” in the full sense of that term. He was a faithful husband, a devoted father, a true friend. He loved his home and his home life. That home was always open to his friends — and they were sincerely welcome at any hour.

There was a side to Milo’s life that few persons knew or understood. It was often said by his friends and acquaintances that he had a pessimistic nature or outlook on life. Only by knowing him well could that characteristic be understood and explained. He was all his life an insatiable reader. His favorite reading was biography, history and sociology.

He understood what he read. By his extensive reading he learned well the suffering his fellowmen endured in trying to overcome the forces of evil. He was an uncompromising enemy of oppression, injustice and usurpation. He detested political, spiritual and economic oppression. His sympathies were with the common man and his eternal conflict with those forces. He felt that man’s struggle with man was but partially won. He used to say that the saddest fact of life is man’s inconsideration of man. Dominated by that thought he developed strong likes and dislikes toward his fellow man. His idealism was neither communism nor a nebulous Utopia, but a workable and real fraternalism motivated by the Golden Rule. The fact that he realized that his idealism was probably never going to become real, and that man had suffered so much throughout the ages because of man’s inhumanity, made Milo Stevens justifiably a “pessimist.” Yet how tragic that there are no more among us who might be called the kind of pessimist he was.

H. E. Maag

February 1, 1945
Minneapolis, Minnesota



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