

Tribute To A Judge Who Will Be Missed By Many

By Hon. John Davis

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Jim Himelic took early retirement last January for health reasons. Losing him is a great loss for the Juvenile Court. Jim is the most sincerely humble person I have ever met. His modesty and lack of ego obscured—for those who did not know him well—a tremendous talent. During his career as an attorney, he demonstrated that he was among the elite in his profession.

I first met Jim when we were at the Pima County Attorney's Office. In the quiet fashion that characterized his legal career, Jim became a legend as a prosecutor. He was respected by his supervisors and was looked to in awe by the junior prosecutors. He tried some of the most difficult and infamous cases. One of those cases was the murder prosecution of the notorious Jimmie Jeffers. This case was headline news for months and public interest escalated after Jeffers escaped. The Himelic family had to relocate to a relative's home until Jeffers was recaptured.

Jim went into private practice after leaving the County Attorney's Office. He was as good a lawyer in private practice as he was a prosecutor. Those who mistook his lack of ego for lack of talent left the courtroom on the losing end of a lesson from an excellent lawyer. As good as Jim was in private practice, he soon sought the opportunity to return to public service as a judge.

In 1995, Jim was appointed a Commissioner. He brought to the bench a perfect demeanor and temperament, along with the skills of a talented attorney. He never complained about anything at any time. His work ethic was exemplary. Jim was always conscientious and a credit to the Pima County Bench.

As shining as his professional accomplishments are, I believe Jim was most proud of what a good husband, father and friend he has always been. Everyone who got to know Jim found him to be a good and special man. His family saw these qualities everyday. It was a wonderful experience to talk with Jim about his children, Danny, Ana, Mike, Jamie, Jimmy and Jenny. He could always give you the best advice about parenting in a kind and subtle way by telling a story about one of his children.

I will especially miss that advice being available to us here at the Juvenile Court. A glimpse into the mind and heart of Jim Himelic is illustrated in an article he wrote for the Juvenile Court newsletter in February 1998:

“In January 1997, I started my assignment at Juvenile Court. Although a two-week orientation was provided, I must admit I am still somewhat overwhelmed with procedures, policies and practice. However, three things became immediately clear to me. First, most of our “juvenile problems” are in actuality “parent problems” or more accurately “lack of parent” problems.

So many of our cases come to us because of dysfunctional or abusive parents or because the parents have abdicated their obligations to raise their own children.

Second, although there are services available to remedy these situations, many times it is difficult to define the appropriate services, and many more times, the family refuses to accept or participate in the services.

Third, those sitting on the Juvenile bench before I arrived are not only knowledgeable and caring judges, they are also remarkably helpful to those new judges who are assigned to this division.

The learning curve at Juvenile Court is steep, however, it is certainly made much easier by the assistance of those judges with Juvenile Court experience.”

Jim, we will miss you, our love and prayers go with you and your family always.