

## A Tribute to the Honorable David A. Katz from His “Second Family”<sup>1</sup>

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Will Rogers once wrote, “I never met a man I didnt [sic] like.”<sup>2</sup> There was never a man, or woman, who ever met Judge David Allan Katz who said that they “didnt” like him. Nay, there was never a man or woman who did not fall in *love* with him. His elfish smile and twinkling eyes could charm the coldest of hearts. It is our honor, as his two former career law clerks, to pay tribute to a man who was more than our employer.

We were the lucky ones, the seventeen law clerks, two courtroom deputies, and one judicial assistant who worked for Judge Katz during his nearly twenty-two years of service on the federal bench. We were the lucky ones because, with his beloved wife Joan, Judge Katz considered all of us his second family.

We were the lucky ones as we got to spend our days in the same office with a man who would call us “son” or “dear.” A man who would constantly make us laugh. A man who cared for our families and their struggles as if they were members of his own family.

He was a man who respected the institution he represented. Yet, did not take upon himself, unlike others, the elitist air of the position. He remembered he was appointed, not anointed. A man who would answer the telephone, “George’s Bar and Grill, George speaking,” and would call his colleagues “Your Majesty.”

We were the ones who had fun. Whether it was 5:30 p.m. happy hours or purchasing Burger King Whoppers with coupons from Mrs. Katz. We would always use the coupons as we all knew, Judge Katz included, that we would feel Mrs. Katz’s wrath if we failed to use her coupons.

We were the lucky ones as we worked for a man who was so beloved that over 700 people attended his funeral service. A man so respected, so revered, that one former law clerk flew from Tokyo, Japan to attend the service. Attorneys from around the country—California, New York, Florida, the Carolinas, Texas—all came to show their final respects to this truly humble man.

As the days and weeks have passed since his death, we continue to receive condolences from attorneys who once appeared before him. As one such attorney from Chicago expressed, “Judge Katz was one of the great ones.”

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<sup>2</sup> Will Rogers, *Will Gets Sixty Cents Out of J.D.*, HARTFORD COURANT, Feb. 20, 1927, at D2.

Although twice offered a seat on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, once while still a young man in private practice in his forties, he wisely declined the offers, as the personal petty politics of the circuit was not Judge Katz. The district bench was his forte; his symphony. Where, as the great conductor, he orchestrated the parties and lawyers to a crescendo induced finale before once again taking up the baton to conduct yet another case to its flourishing conclusion.

We were the lucky ones as each year Judge Katz would contact his second family, his law clerks and administrative staff, past and present, to gather at his home to express his and Mrs. Katz's appreciation. Just days before his death, Judge Katz had the goal of becoming well enough to have one last reunion. One last time we would gather again in fellowship and friendship to listen again to his humble thank you for our services.

He received his wish. For on July 28, 2016, his second family once again gathered. This time to say our goodbyes. As we sat in our special section of the temple, we wept. It was next to us that his coffin and actual family passed. As the dutiful members that we are, we followed him to his final resting place. We gathered, as he had wished, so for this one last time, we, his second family, could humbly give our thank yous.

We *were* the lucky ones.