

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

JUDGE MARGARET S. BRILES

THE HONORABLE MARGARET S. BRILES died in Naples, Florida on October 27, 2009, at the age of 84. Margaret was a remarkable individual and if you were fortunate enough to have known her, as I was, you will never forget her.

Margaret Stevenson was born on April 28, 1925 and grew up in Elburn, Illinois. After graduation from high school and North Central College in Naperville, Margaret obtained her law degree from the University of Chicago Law School. In 1948 she came to Davenport to practice law with the firm of Lambach, Christiansen, Stevenson and Goebel. In addition to practicing law with that firm, she was appointed to be a referee in the Scott County Juvenile Court. In an era when there were very few women lawyers, she distinguished herself as a trial lawyer – no small feat in an exclusively male club at that time. In 1973 she was appointed corporate counsel for the City of Davenport, and saw it as her duty to do as much trial work as her position would still allow. As a young lawyer, I was in her office one day trying to settle lawsuit I had filed against the city when she received a telephone call. The person on the other end of the line got a royal chewing out from her. When she hung up the phone, she started to laugh, however. It seems two squad cars stopped on a residential street so the officers could talk to each other – they were facing opposite directions. They received emergency radio dispatches and each needed to go in the opposite direction. Each pulled into a home driveway to back out and go the other direction and proceeded to back into each other, doing considerable damage to both squad cars. She said it was a really dumb thing for the officers to do and knew the newspaper would pick it up, but she could also see the humor in it.

In 1977 Governor Robert Ray appointed Margaret Stevenson to be a district court judge in the Seventh Judicial District of Iowa. She was the first woman to be appointed as a District Court Judge in the State of Iowa. At the request of her four daughters, who were very proud of her, she began to use her married name and she became Judge Margaret Briles at that time. Margaret served as a full time District Court judge until 1992 when she took senior judge status. She was an extremely hard working judge – always at the top of her game. She was always a student of the law, and attended many advanced education courses and seminars above and beyond what was required. She demanded attorneys always perform their best and many lawyers who did not, felt the sting of her critique. They would do better the next time they appeared in front of her. Her knowledge and expertise in the law were greatly respected by all of her colleagues. She was known to be a tough but fair judge and to those who sought her advice and counsel she was a valuable mentor and a compassionate friend.

Margaret Briles had many accomplishments and acknowledgements throughout her long and distinguished career as an attorney and judge. She appears in the first and second editions of Who's Who in American Women and she was voted Woman of the Year for the tri-cities of Moline, Rock Island and Davenport. She served on both the Davenport and Bettendorf school boards and many other boards and commissions. In 1975 she was named an Outstanding Alumni for North Central College in Naperville. Judge Briles was a committed supporter of the Equal Rights amendment and she was the parliamentarian of the Iowa League of Women Voters. In 2005 Judge Briles was honored along with five other women judges as pioneers in the field of law in Iowa.

Margaret was a woman of many interests. She loved classical music and was an accomplished pianist. She enjoyed films and theater, travel, cooking, gardening, history and crossword puzzles. As a young practicing lawyer, she became a licensed small passenger airplane pilot. She could regale people with many stories on very diverse topics which showed her interest in a wide diversity of aspects of life. She traveled extensively both before and after her retirement, and once took her ten year old twin grandchildren on an African safari.

Margaret was married to Donald Briles for many good years and she and Don were the parents of four fine daughters. Don died in 1987, and one of her daughters, Martha, also preceded her in death. Margaret is survived by her three remaining daughters, Susan, Sarah, and Elizabeth, four grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Madam President, I would propose the following resolution be adopted by this association:

BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the Iowa Judges Association assembled this 16th day of June, 2010, that the Association and its members extend their sincere sympathy to the family and friends of Margaret S. Briles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be filed in the records of the Iowa Judges Association and a copy of this resolution be sent to her daughters for distribution to the family.

Respectfully submitted:

Judge J. Hobart Darbyshire June 16, 2010