

MEMORIAL

HON. RALPH F. McCARTNEY

IOWA JUDGES ASSOCIATION –JUNE 20, 2007

Ralph Farnham McCartney was born on December 11, 1924 in Charles City, Iowa, the son of Ralph C. and Helen (Farnham) McCartney. He died in Charles City on March 10, 2007 at the age of 82.

Judge McCartney began frequenting the Floyd County Courthouse in Charles City at an early age. When he was in high school his father was elected Floyd County Sheriff and he and his family lived in the Sheriff's quarters on the fourth floor of the courthouse. He graduated from Charles City High School in 1942. He served in the U.S. Army 89th Division during World War II from 1943 to 1945. He attended Iowa State University and Cornell University and graduated from the University of Michigan Law School in 1950.

Judge McCartney married Rhoda Mae Huxsol on June 25, 1950 in Charles City. He practiced law in Des Moines for two years and returned to Charles City in 1952 and went into partnership with Jack Frye.

Judge McCartney was one of a select few Iowans who have served with distinction in all of the state's three branches of government. He was elected to the Iowa House of Representatives and served during the 62nd and 63rd General Assemblies from 1967 to 1970 and was the House Majority Leader during his second term. He was a member of the Iowa State Board of Regents from 1970 to 1972. He represented the 7th District in the Iowa Senate during the 65th General Assembly from 1973 to 1974. While serving in the legislature he earned the respect of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle. His word was trusted and his reputation grew.

Judge McCartney was active in state politics prior to his appointment to the bench. In 1971 he served as Honorary Colonel for the inauguration of Governor Ray. He chaired the Republican State Convention in 1972. In 1976 he was the Iowa director for President Gerald Ford's election campaign.

Governor Robert D. Ray appointed Judge McCartney to the District Court bench in December of 1978. From 1987 to 1992 he also served as Chief Judge for the Second Judicial District. While serving in that position in 1989 he was instrumental in creating the Civil Legal Assistance Fund, which continues to provide financial assistance to indigent litigants in family law cases. The fund is driven by the concept that an indigent parent should have access to legal representation where custody or physical placement of his or her minor child is at issue. Judge McCartney also served on the Judicial Coordinating Committee of the Iowa Supreme Court and chaired the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Administration of Clerks. In 1992 he went on senior status with the Iowa Court of Appeals. In 1995 he was the recipient of the prestigious Award of Merit from this association.

Judge McCartney was also a good citizen and was active in his community. He was a member of the First Congregational Church in Charles City and served on its building committee and chaired the Prudential Board. He served on the board of directors of the Lincoln Club, United Fund, the Salvation Army and YMCA. He was president of the Lions Club. He was also a member of St. Charles Masonic Lodge #141 and Consistory, the Floyd County Historical Society, the Charles City Art Association, the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion.

Judge McCartney loved the law. He also had a deep respect for our justice system and he expected that same respect from his colleagues on the bench and the lawyers practicing before him. He had a keen analytical mind. He was a wordsmith and a master of the King's English. He often expressed pride in the quality of the judges and lawyers of the Subdistrict 2A. After taking senior status and during his retirement years, he enjoyed keeping in touch with his former colleagues on the bench. If you were presiding in Floyd County, you knew you had a standing invitation to the McCartney residence after court service day on Monday for some good scotch and stimulating conversation. The judge and Rhoda were always gracious hosts. The Floyd County assignment will not be the same after his passing.

Judge McCartney lived a full and productive life. He and Rhoda and his children traveled extensively. He was also a student of history. He was proud of his Scottish heritage and several of those trips took him and his family to his beloved Scotland.

Judge McCartney is survived by Rhoda, his wife of 56 years; two sons, Ralph and his wife, Lisa, of Washington D.C., and David and his partner, James Petersen, of Iowa City; a daughter, Julia Deutchman, and her husband, Leonard, of Philadelphia; and one granddaughter, Sara Deutchman, of Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Mr. President, I move that this memorial be spread upon the records of this association and a copy sent to Rhoda and the children.