

# In Memory of Jeffery Leon Harris

Jeffery Leon Harris was born May 5, 1952 in South Beloit, Illinois, the son of Mildred Harris. Judge Harris grew up in Rockford, Illinois and graduated from West High School in 1970. Following high school he attended the University of Minnesota where he was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and earned his undergraduate degree in 1974. Judge Harris received his Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Iowa graduating in 1977.

Following graduation from the University of Iowa with his law degree Judge Harris entered the United States Army serving in the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps until 1989. Judge Harris served as an officer and staff attorney with the Army around the globe including posts in Korea and Germany. After leaving the Army Judge Harris returned to his home town Rockford, Illinois and began working for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. He subsequently moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa and joined the Iowa Legal Aid Regional Office as a legal aid attorney. After a his stint as a legal aid attorney Judge Harris joined the Black Hawk County Attorney's Office in Waterloo, Iowa as a felony prosecutor, handling major felony cases.

In 1997 Judge Harris was appointed to the bench as a District Associate Judge for the First Judicial District working primarily in Grundy, Black Hawk and Buchanan Counties. After his appointment Judge Harris moved to Grundy County where he was assigned responsibility for both, Magistrate and Juvenile Court as well as his work in District Court.

Judge Harris was known for being rather stern when on the bench and was especially particular about promptness and decorum in his courtroom, which in all probability derived from his military career and the formality of military judicial proceedings. Judge Harris on occasion jokingly referred to himself as "The Mean Judge" due to his propensity for being candid and frank with both attorneys and litigants. Judge Harris however was also known as being compassionate in his rulings seeking not only to impose consequences that would hold individuals accountable for their actions but to also help them learn from their mistakes and move forward as better persons. He would often require written reports on the dangers of smoking or vaping by underage youth cited for using those products. Judge Harris was regarded by his colleagues and court staff to be affable and gracious. He was particularly expressive of his gratitude to jurors who served on trials over which he presided by handing out a "Certificate of Appreciation" to each juror.

Judge Harris was a private individual, but what everyone knew about Judge Jeff Harris, the title of which he was most proud was not one of military rank or that of “judge” but rather the title of “Father” to his son Jeffery. Judge Harris enjoyed sharing stories about his son and their travels together most particularly the many college visits they made during Jeffery’s junior year in high school. Jeffery wrote about his father, “My dad poured his heart into everything he did, whether it was at work or at home. He loved to dance and jam out to Old School Funk, R&B, and Soul music. Often times, it would be hard not to find him listening to music on the TV or on his phone. He went out of his way to make sure I was happy and content with my life. Words could never describe how much he has impacted me and others, but I know that the 17 years I got to spend with him will forever shape who I am and who I’m going to be as a person.”

Judge Jeffrey L. Harris died unexpectedly of natural causes on June 22, 2021. He is survived by his daughter, Triana Harris; his son, Jeffery L. Harris II; his sister L’tanya Jones; three nieces; two great-nieces; and two great nephews as well as a host of other relatives and friends. He was predeceased by his mother Mildred Harris.

Mr. President, I move that this memorial be unanimously approved and spread upon the records of the Iowa Judge’s Association.