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Retired Eastern District of Pa. Judge Lowell Reed, 89, Remembered as a Leading Mentor

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Of the Legal staff

Retired U.S. District Judge Lowell Reed, a mentor to many in the Philadelphia legal community, has died at the age of 89 following a lengthy bout with Parkinson's disease.

Reed, who spent 23 years on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, died in his sleep April 11.

Reed, appointed to the federal bench in 1988 by President Ronald Reagan, was a prominent figure in the legal community through his retirement in 2011, and is being remembered by many leading members of the bench and bar as an inspiration and guiding hand in their careers.

"As a lawyer, he was straightforward and honest. As a judge he was sensitive and practical," Kline & Specter attorney Shanin Specter said. **"I represented the estate of a young wife and mother who perished tragically in Morocco on a bike tour. Judge Reed brought all the parties together in his chambers. In a loving but skilled way he resolved the lawsuit. That's who he was."**

Born in West Chester, Reed's family moved to Kenosha, Wisconsin, when he was young. However, after spending time as a Naval intelligence officer, he moved to Abington and eventually graduated from Temple

University's Beasley School of Law in 1958. According to Reed's son, Jeffrey Reed, in college he was on a business track, but fell in love with the law while taking notes in a few pre-law classes for a roommate of his who had gotten sick.

After law school, Lowell Reed worked as trial counsel for the Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association, and then joined Rawle & Henderson. He spent 25 years at the firm, focusing on medical malpractice, toxic torts, complex litigation and products liability.

Former Philadelphia Judge Annette Rizzo said Reed was a mentor of hers while she worked at the firm. Since he had an impact in so many aspects of the legal community, Rizzo said he was a "bigger than life" figure, but he always took time to talk with younger attorneys about everything from family life to the complexity of the legal cases before them.

"We worked so hard in these cases, and I learned so much about the art and science of the law, but also he was a mentor in the art of living," she said. "He was always interested in the human elements. That resonated with me and shaped how I approach cases in the defense practice and the thoughtfulness I brought to the bench."

While at PMA, Reed developed a longtime friendship with political power broker Fred Anton, and it was this relationship that eventually led the insider to put Reed's name before Sen. Arlen Specter. A longtime member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Specter eventually sponsored Reed for a judgeship.

While on the bench, some of the more notable cases Reed handled included a \$1.3 billion settlement in an asbestos multidistrict litigation, involving 20 companies and more than 100,000 claimants, and striking down the 1998 Child Online Protection Act, which made it a crime for commercial web site operators to allow children access to "harmful" material.

Several colleagues described Reed as a deliberative judge, who was courteous and professional. Although he was often described as soft-spoken and approachable, those who worked before him or alongside him on the bench said he was also firm and had high expectations for those who practiced in front of him.

"He was soft-spoken, but he was very smart," said U.S. District Senior Judge Michael Baylson, who said he had a few cases before Reed before he was also appointed to the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. "He was always interested in getting at the truth of the matter, but in a very quiet and deliberative way."

Senior Judge Jan DuBois said his career mirrored Reed's in many ways, as they were both defense attorneys at the same time, even working on a few cases together while at different firms, and were appointed to the bench only a few months apart. DuBois said Reed was a skilled litigator and went on to being a great judge and colleague.

"His opinions were very thoughtful, well-reasoned and really quite good," DuBois said.

Reed took senior status in 1999, and afterward developed a mediation program where many of the court's most complex cases came for resolution.

"Everyone wanted his services," Judge Cynthia Rufe said. "We have many fine judges who can help settle a case, but when there were special ones, complex matters involving multiple parties, he would be tapped. ... Everyone left the mediation, or the courtroom feeling they had been heard."

Along with being an active member of the Philadelphia Bar Association and the Philadelphia Association of Defense Counsel, one area of the legal community Reed was especially involved in was the Inn of Court movement in America. In 1990, he was a founding member of the Temple American Inn of Court, which was the first Inn of Court in Pennsylvania and one of only a handful in the country at the time. He also served as its first president.

Inns of Court organizations are modeled after institutions established in the United Kingdom and work to improve the skills, professionalism and ethics of the bench and bar. The groups, which are made up of judges, lawyers and sometimes law students, meet regularly to discuss and make presentations about these issues.

Blank Rome attorney Anthony Haller, who has also served as president of the Temple American Inn of Court, said Reed not only was a driving force in establishing the Inn of Court here, but he was also a lasting thought-leader for the organization.

"One could reasonably say the tradition of our inn really derives from the vision, leadership and tender care that Judge Reed gave to the inn," Haller said. "He was in a classic, metaphorical sense a constant gardener of our inn."

In 2003, Reed won the A. Sherman Christensen award for his work advancing the Inn of Court movement.

Reed retired from the bench in 2011, but several colleagues said the example he set for judges and lawyers stuck with them.

"He was stellar in everything he did," Rufe said. "You never talked to Lowell without knowing he was considering what you were saying."