



United States Court of Appeals
for the Ninth Circuit

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CHAMBERS OF
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April 1, 2020

To: Colleagues
From: Chief Judge Thomas
Re: Judge James A. Redden

Chief Judge Hernandez has informed me of the sad news that Judge James A. Redden passed away on March 31, 2020, at the age of 91. As Chief Judge Hernandez aptly observed: "Oregon's entire judicial family mourns the loss of this extraordinary man." As do we all.

James Anthony Redden was born in Springfield, Massachusetts on March 13, 1929, the third child of his father, James A. Redden, Sr., and his mother, Alma. His father was a dentist and, in his oral history, Judge Redden noted that his mother was "a very intelligent, strong woman." At age 17, he left high school and enlisted in the United States Army, serving two years as a medic in post-war Japan, where he witnessed the aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing firsthand. After his discharge, he returned to finish high school, where he met his future wife, Joan Johnson. They married in 1950 and had two sons, James and William. Judge Redden attended Boston College and graduated from Boston College Law School in 1954.

He moved to Portland, Oregon in 1955 and later joined a law firm in Medford, where he practiced the next 17 years. Judge Redden was a charter member of the American Board of Trial Advocates.

He became active in Democratic politics and, as a favor to a friend, ran for election as a state representative from Jackson County. To his surprise, he was elected, and served in the Oregon House of Representatives and during the 1963, 1965, and 1967 sessions. Senior U.S. District Judge Robert E. Jones recalls being a "freshman legislator" with Judge Redden that year. "We called him 'landslide Redden' because he won by only a couple hundred votes. His notes on the issues were priceless! Jim was a very bright guy and a close buddy."

He was elected House Minority Leader during the 1967 session. His wife, Joan, worked as his secretary, something Judge Redden noted in his oral history “was not only common but necessary” in order to “stagger[] through the session with no financial problem.” As House Minority Leader, Judge Redden worked on the Oregon Beach Bill, which guaranteed public access to Oregon’s beaches. But as that 1967 session “went on and on,” Judge Redden’s last minute rewrite of the Bill put an extraordinary burden on Joan, who ended up having to move the family’s belongings out of their rented home in Salem while Judge Redden finished work on the Bill. “I got in my car when it was all done and drove back to the old house before I realized, ‘My God, I was supposed to move today.’” He was known in the legislature for his bipartisan approach.

In 1968, Judge Redden served as an Oregon delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. He was elected Oregon State Treasurer in 1972. He lost in the Democratic primary for Governor in 1974, but was elected Oregon Attorney General in 1976. As Attorney General, he was noted for his tireless work with Native American tribes to strike an agreement on fish allocation, respecting their treaty rights.

He was nominated to the United States District Court by President Jimmy Carter on December 3, 1979, along with his colleagues Owen Panner and Helen Frye. He was confirmed by the United States Senate, and received his commission on February 20, 1980. He served as Chief Judge of the District of Oregon from 1990 to 1995, and assumed senior status on March 13, 1995. He fully retired March 31, 2017.

As a district judge, he was best known as the federal judge who repeatedly ordered the Bonneville Power Administration to rewrite its plans to protect Columbia River salmon to comply with the U.S. Endangered Species Act. As District Judge Michael Simon noted, his rulings in the so-called “Salmon Case” were widely covered by the national news media, environmental publications and legal journals. And in his last years of judicial service, Redden was a stalwart leader of the Portland Reentry Court.

In 1996, in legislation sponsored by Senator Mark Hatfield, Congress renamed the federal courthouse in Medford, Oregon, the “James A. Redden Federal Courthouse” in his honor. Noting that the courthouse was in “Judge Redden's beloved Jackson County,” Senator Hatfield remarked that “it would be a highly appropriate honor to name this courthouse after an individual who has done so much, and who has had such a successful career.” Judge Redden was present at the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the courthouse in 2016.

Former Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski offered these comments about Redden’s “happy time as an Oregon political figure,” while acknowledging that Joan Redden would not have agreed with that characterization: “I have always thought Jim would have been a great Governor for Oregon. He had a great skill set for politics. He was smart, and he liked and understood people. He was practical and moderate in his views, and he never forgot where he came from. On top of all of that, he was funny and could laugh at himself. Those are traits that are sorely missing in today’s public discourse.”

Circuit Judge Ed Leavy said that “Judge Redden was a prime example of collegiality.” Chief Judge Hernandez observed that “Judge Redden was loved and respected by court staff and judicial colleagues alike.” Courtroom Deputy Trish Hunt recalls: “Judge Redden was a real go-getter and avid runner. At the ripe age of 80 and not even four weeks after his open-heart surgery, he was seen on the waterfront in a full-out sprint trying to get back into shape. He wasn’t going to let a valve replacement keep him down.”

U.S. Magistrate Judge Jolie A. Russo, who worked for Judge Redden for about 10 years early in her career, treasured his mentoring even after she left his employ. “Judge Redden taught me the value of public service. He respected the position of a federal judge and never put himself above the process. He treated all people with courtesy, respect, and fairness while maintaining an incredible work ethic. He was always well prepared, inquisitive in the courtroom, and timely with his decisions. A true fan of a good practical joke (often at my expense), his wicked sense of humor was an endearing trait that stayed with him throughout his life. I am fortunate to have begun my legal career under his tutelage and even more grateful for the friendship we shared and that I already miss.”

U.S. Magistrate Judge Paul Papak recalls Judge Redden “was a great judge and an absolutely great guy. I had the pleasure of trying multiple criminal cases before him when I was with the Federal Defender’s Office, one of which we would talk about for years afterwards. He was fair-minded, even-tempered, and completely respectful of all who appeared before him.”

U.S. District Judges Michael H. Simon and Karin J. Immergut recall similar positive experiences trying cases in Judge Redden’s Court and looked to Redden as a judicial role model. Although Senior U.S. District Judge Anna J. Brown had never met Judge Redden before her appointment process in 1999, he reached out to her early and gave her “practical and eternally helpful advice” as she learned to be a federal district judge. She notes “Jim Redden’s door was always open, and

while he would treat requests for counsel seriously, he always left me smiling. He was the ultimate judge and all-round good guy whose life of service is a model for all of us.”

As Kerry Tymchuk, Executive Director of the Oregon Historical Society, said today: “As a state legislator, state treasurer, attorney general, and United States District Judge, Jim Redden was one of the most influential Oregonians of the last half of the 20th Century. Throughout his public service he earned a well-deserved reputation for intelligence, integrity, decency, hard work, and a sense of humor.”

I can’t add much to those descriptions, except to say that Jim was a wonderful person and judge, possessing great warmth and humor, a great passion for justice, and a deep love of Oregon. He will be missed.

Many of Judge Redden’s public records and a recorded personal history are available at the Oregon Historical Society. Judge Redden was preceded in death by his wife, Joan Redden, who passed away in 2018. Judge Redden is survived by his two sons, James A. Redden III and William Francis Redden. A public service will be held after restrictions on gatherings are lifted and, as his son Jim said, “when the bars reopen.” In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Housecall Providers in Portland. I thank Chief Judge Hernandez, Adair Law, and all the judges who shared their stories for their contribution to this remembrance.

And there are rumors that the salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River gave him a 21 fin salute.