



JUDGE HENRY C. KEENE 1919 - 2011

The Alaska Court System is sad to learn of the passing of Judge Henry C. Keene (Ret.) of Ketchikan, who served on the Ketchikan District Court from 1968-1982 and on the Wrangell Superior Court from 1982-1985. He died on October 5, 2011, at the age of 91. Judge Keene was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and raised near Washington, D.C. He graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in December 1941, immediately after Pearl Harbor, and served on ships throughout World War II. After the war, his Coast Guard career took him to Korea and the Philippines before eventually bringing him to Alaska, where he commanded the Ketchikan Coast Guard Base from 1963-1965. Although he intended to stay in Ketchikan for only a few years, the community would remain his family's home for the rest of his life, and he would embrace it fully.

Judge Keene is remembered by First District Presiding Judge Trevor Stephens of Ketchikan as "an officer, a gentleman, and community activist and supporter in the truest and best sense of these words." Judge Keene was an ardent supporter of youth sports for decades, serving as President of both Little League and Babe Ruth Baseball. He served on the Ketchikan General Hospital board for many years and is remembered for working tirelessly to raise funds on behalf of the First City Council on Cancer. He was an active member of the Rotary 2000 Club and also served over the years on the boards of the museum, the community college, and the Chamber of Commerce. In 2001, the Chamber of Commerce named him "Citizen of the Year" for "unparalleled" community service. Judge Keene was "far more to this community than a retired judge," according to Judge Stephens, "he was one heck of a guy who knew everybody in town and who was respected and beloved by this community."

Chief Justice Walter Carpeneti of the Alaska Supreme Court, who appeared before Judge Keene as a young attorney in Juneau, says "(t)he example he set has left its mark on scores of young attorneys, and the lessons that he taught...will continue to ensure that our courts meet the highest standards of competence, fairness, and professionalism for decades to come."

Judge Keene's decades of public service--as a member of the judiciary, a leader in the Coast Guard, and as an enthusiastic supporter of his community--were great gifts to the people of Alaska. We appreciate his many contributions and extend our deepest sympathy to his family and friends.

