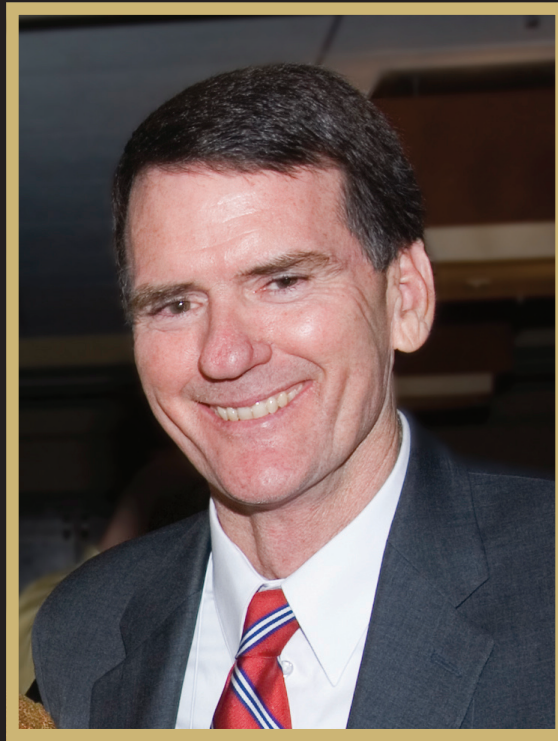


IN MEMORIAM  
1947-2011



Chief U.S. District Judge John M. Roll  
District of Arizona

*The Massachusetts Bar Association  
mourns the loss of our esteemed colleague.  
The bar supports its brothers and sisters  
in Arizona during this difficult time.*



CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF SERVICE TO THE  
PUBLIC, THE PROFESSION AND THE RULE OF LAW

IN MEMORIAM

# John McCarthy Roll

## Chief judge, U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona

BY RICHARD P. CAMPBELL

“Service terminated on Jan. 8, 2011, due to death.”

So reads the Biographical Directory of Federal Judges published by the Federal Judicial Center in its description of Judge John McCarthy Roll’s federal judicial service. The capstone to Judge Roll’s service is mindlessly efficient, presumably satisfying some bureaucratic limit on the amount of space that can be used, as if this entry were an appellate brief filed in the 9th Circuit.

The premature death of a sitting judge saddens, raises images of important work that could have been done, and causes us to reflect on the frailty of life.

Martha Sosman lost her life to cancer at age 56. Imagine the impact that she would have made on our jurisprudence with another 14 years of service on the Supreme Judicial Court.

Reginald Lindsay was 64 when he passed away. How many more lawyers, law students and others would have benefited from his mentoring?

David Nelson was 58 when illness forced him to take senior status. As Alzheimer’s stripped Judge Nelson of his strength and character, we were robbed of his wisdom, grace and consummate good will.

But with each of these judges, and ordinarily with the passing of most sitting judges, we have time to accept the loss and the ability to measure it against our family and personal experiences.

The murder of a sitting judge, or

prosecutor or trial lawyer, is altogether different in its impact on us. Judges and lawyers understand and appreciate the full potential that may come about from violent attacks on officers of the court. We know that our prosperity is founded on three critically important features of day-to-day life: safety, security and predictability in our dealings with businesses, institutions and each other. We fuse these topics into a single phrase: the rule of law.

Judge Roll’s murder, not unlike the murders of federal judges John Wood (1979), Richard Daronco (1988) and Robert Smith Vance (1989), reminds us of the societal peril that flows inexorably from violent attacks like this one. Paraphrasing the theme of the 1996 ABA Annual Meeting, *without safe and secure judges and lawyers*, freedom, justice and liberty are “*just words*.”

Chief Justice John G. Roberts made the point in his public statement on the murder: “Chief Judge Roll’s death is a somber reminder of the importance of the rule of law and the sacrifices of those who work to secure it.”

Judge Roll was a native of Pittsburgh. His family moved to Arizona to accommodate his mother’s failing health. When she died, Judge Roll (then 15 years old) changed his middle name to “McCarthy” (his mother’s maiden name) so as to keep alive her memory. By all accounts, Judge Roll was a devout Roman Catholic who attended Mass every day, including the day he was killed. One former law clerk posted this note about him on a website: “Judge Roll displayed literally heroic virtue in his serving of God in his profession and his consistent, daily display of care and courtesy for the value of every person he encountered.”

Justice Pelander of the Arizona Supreme Court told NPR that Judge Roll had a “great intellect and great legal abil-



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

Judge John McCarthy Roll

ity” and that he was “a judge’s judge” who was “well respected by his colleagues” on the federal bench, throughout the entire state judiciary and across all members of the bar.

John McCarthy Roll received his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Arizona and a LL.M. from the University of Virginia School of Law. He served the public as an assistant city attorney, deputy county attorney, assistant U.S. attorney, Superior Court judge, Appeals Court judge and chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona. He leaves his wife Maureen, three children and five grandchildren.

While mourning his loss, his brothers and sisters of the Massachusetts Bar celebrate his life of public service and his commitment to the rule of law. ■

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