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## Legacy of Laughter: Senior Judge Dies at 72

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Descriptions of retired Cobb Superior Court Chief Judge Robert E. "Bob"

Flournoy Jr. are as colorful as his legal career.

Called flamboyant, brilliant, funny, and a warrior for the common man,

Flournoy was a charismatic lawyer who held almost every position invented

for a lawyer, from deputy assistant attorney general and city attorney

to chief superior court judge.

Flournoy died unexpectedly on Sunday at age 72 from complications after

a fall that injured his back. Flournoy's funeral will be held at 11 a.m.

Wednesday at First Baptist Church in Marietta. Mayes Ward-Dobbins Funeral

Home in Marietta is in charge of the arrangements.

Flournoy served as Marietta mayor from 1982 to 1985. Current Marietta

Mayor William B. "Bill" Dunaway said flags will fly at half-staff in Marietta

until the funeral.

Former congressman and Cobb district attorney, George "Buddy" Darden,

now a partner with McKenna Long & Aldridge, summarized Flournoy's courtroom

style. He said Flournoy "had that rare ability to bring humor into the courtroom and use it to his advantage." Darden said he had trouble winning cases against Flournoy because of it.

"I tried, as a DA, several cases against him, and I don't believe I was ever successful. A couple of times he literally had the jury and the judge laughing at my case. He had that extraordinary ability," said Darden, who counted Flournoy among his close friends.

Also among Flournoy's close friends was former Gov. Roy E. Barnes, a fellow Marietta lawyer, whom Flournoy had visited last week seeking aid on a civic project, Barnes said.

Said Barnes, "We tried cases both for and against each other. He had the unique ability to simplify a problem so a judge or jury could understand it. He was very flamboyant in the courtroom."

Barnes recalled that Flournoy, who "could always turn a phrase and was so funny," once asked to halt a divorce case for an "instant investigation."

When the judge asked why, Flournoy "sat up, took his glasses off and said 'I've noticed every divorce case we have now has a request for braces for kids. There must be something in the water that is causing crooked teeth in Cobb County. I demand an instant investigation into what's causing crooked teeth in Cobb County,'" Barnes recalled with a chuckle.

During his term as governor, Barnes appointed Flournoy to the Commission on Certainty in Sentencing and the Judicial Nominating Commission. Barnes also appointed Flournoy's son Robert E. Flournoy III to the Cobb Superior

Court just six months before the elder Flournoy retired in 2000.

Born in Atlanta, the elder Flournoy earned his associate degree from Emory

University and his law degree from the University of Georgia in 1952.

He served as a captain in the U.S. Air Force from 1952 to 1953.

In 1953, he was a law clerk to Atlanta Judicial Circuit Judge Ralph H.

Pharr and then was an associate with Dunaway & Embry in Atlanta from 1954

to 1957. In 1957, he moved to Marietta where he practiced with Reed, Ingram

& Flournoy, the firm of former Georgia Supreme Court Justice G. Conley

Ingram.

Said Barnes: "They were the dominant firm here in town."

Running the Government Gamut

Beginning in 1957, Flournoy did stints as a government lawyer, sometimes

with overlapping clients. He served as assistant city attorney of Smyrna

through 1963, was an assistant county attorney in Cobb through 1964 and

then was a deputy assistant attorney general from 1961 to 1984. He also

served as attorney for the Lake Acworth Authority from 1963-66.

Flournoy then entered politics, winning election to the Georgia House

in 1963. He later lost his bid for re-election. In 1982, he was elected

mayor of Marietta, served one term and didn't run for re-election.

"He had bigger fish to fry" and wanted to return to his practice, said

his son Matthew C. Flournoy, a Marietta lawyer with Flournoy, Morgan &

Schnat-meier.

The elder Flournoy practiced with Flour-noy and Evans from 1978 to 1987.

His former law partner, Charles A. Evans, now the chief clerk of Cobb

Probate Court, said Flournoy "had a brash personality and was hard to

control if you were on the other side" of him in a courtroom.

Evans had been a summer associate for the firm Reed, Ingram and Flournoy,

and it paid him \$75 per week. At that time, Evans said Flournoy was so

loud he was afraid of him, but they later became law partners.

Gov. Joe Frank Harris appointed Flournoy to the Cobb Superior Court bench

in 1987, where he eventually became chief judge. Flournoy took senior

status in 2000.

Presiding Cobb Juvenile Court Judge Juanita P. Stedman clerked for Flournoy

and said he was like her second father. She learned from him a belief

in the rights of both criminal and civil litigants. "That's something

I really saw through him-that love for the rights provided by the U.S.

and state constitutions," she said.

Flournoy also made his mark in civic work. He was a founder of the Cobb

Bar Association and a member of dozens of boards and associations over

the years, including the Atlanta Regional Commission, Cobb Landmarks and

Historical Society and the Downtown Marietta Development Authority. He

also chaired the Cobb County Democratic Party.

#### A Father's Gifts

Flournoy's son Matthew said his father was a "big influence" on his decision

to become a lawyer.

"He taught me to struggle for the little man against the big powerful corporation," said Matthew.

Matthew said his grandfather's career as a captain in the Atlanta Police Department and his respect for lawyers may have contributed to his father's choice of profession. His grandfather believed lawyers "made a difference in representing people accused of crimes who were sometimes innocent."

Matthew Flournoy also said his dad taught him that representing individuals is "where the action is." Another lesson he learned from his father was that no client should be more than 10 percent of the workload, "because that client is going to control you and you won't be independent," said Matthew.

He said his dad "was not too hot on ADR and mediation." His father believed a judge's role was to listen and let a jury decide. "He believed in the jury system," said Matthew.

In addition to his sons, Flournoy is survived by his wife, Linda Jones Flournoy of Marietta; two daughters, Gwynn F. Ross of Marietta and Natalie F. Boss of Greenville, S.C.; a stepdaughter, Shelby J. Weeks of Marietta; four grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested contributions be made to the Calvary Children's Home, Cobb Landmarks and Historical Society or the Marietta First Baptist Church. [end]

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