



Chief Justice Paul Clarence Murphy III

February 26, 2018

Paul Clarence Murphy III, 81, died on February 26, 2018.

He was born September 23, 1936, in Houston, Texas, to Paul C. Murphy, Jr. and wife Katherine.

In 1954, he graduated from San Jacinto High School where he acquired his love of music and proficiency with two instruments - the trumpet and string bass. Paul excelled as a band member and served as drum major.

His interest in music continued after he entered the University of Houston. He was a member of the Cougar Marching Band, ROTC Band and University of Houston Orchestra. Active in campus politics, he was elected as both Junior and Senior Class President. He was also a proud member of Sigma Chi Fraternity and enjoyed participating in the annual Frontier Fiesta. His senior year, he was honored as one of ten outstanding students at the University. Upon graduation, he was named a Distinguished Military Graduate and awarded a Commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Military Police Corps. After graduation, he became a Bellaire High School faculty member, partly financing his education at the University of Houston Law Center, from which he graduated in 1964. He also supplemented his income by working in a variety of dance bands, big and small, throughout the Houston area.

After graduation from Law School, he entered the service and was stationed at the U.S. Military Police School in Augusta, Georgia where he served as a law instructor teaching Constitutional law and the Uniform Code of Military Justice to officers of all ranks. There, he achieved the rank of 1st Lieutenant. After separation, and foregoing a career in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, he returned to Houston where he joined the law firm of Clawson & Jennings, an insurance defense firm. During his tenure there, he was a successful trial lawyer, trying numerous civil cases while continuing to pursue his musical interests.

In 1971, he formed the litigation firm of Malone & Murphy with W.R. Malone of Huntsville, Texas, whom he met while trying cases in Huntsville. The firm grew into Malone, Murphy, Fenley & Lee with offices in Houston and Huntsville. He was also President of Sam Houston Landmark Title Company. He and three other men established West Briar School, a non-profit, non-denominational private school in Southwest Houston. West Briar School opened in September 1971 with 57 students and quickly grew to 450 students, ranging from grades K-12.

In 1972, his family relocated to Huntsville, built their home, and enjoyed the small town atmosphere and the many friends they acquired. It was in Huntsville that he became politically active in the Republican Party. He served as Precinct Chairman, was elected as County Chairman and elected to the State Executive committee for the 5th Senatorial District composed of 21 Counties. Through his efforts, every County held a primary election in 1978 and every year thereafter. In 1980, he was elected to the 14th Court of Civil Appeals, becoming the first Republican Appellate Judge elected in Texas since Reconstruction. In 1982, he and Senator John Tower were Platform Chairmen of the Republican State Convention.

Judge Murphy served on the Court for more than 20 years. He was appointed to a 6-year term as a member of the Texas Judicial Council by Governor William Clements. In 1988, he was the Republican nominee for the Texas Supreme Court. In 1995, he was named Chief Justice of the 14th Court of Appeals by Governor George Bush after the retirement of Chief Justice J. Curtis Brown. During his judicial career, he authored or participated in more than 1,400 opinions. In 2001, he retired from the Court of Appeals but continued to serve as a visiting judge in trial and appellate cases. In addition, he also served as a mediator and arbitrator for Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services (JAMS).

He was a member of the Texas and Houston Bar Associations and admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States and the Southern and Eastern Districts of Texas.

A 50-year Mason, he was very active as a member of DeMolay as a teenager. He later became a dual member of Holland Lodge No. 1 and Forrest Lodge No. 19. He was a 33rd Degree Scottish Rite Mason in the Houston Scottish Rite Bodies and was also a member of the Arabia Shrine Temple.

Judge Murphy was a skilled and avid golfer, playing many courses in the Houston area, as well as several in Scotland, including Turnberry and St. Andrews. As much as he played, he was only able to manage one hole-in-one. Another of his hobbies was restoring his yellow 1961 Triumph TR3 Roadster and driving it around town. He also enjoyed continuing his musical pursuits later in life.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife of 35 years, Barbara, and their daughter, Karen Crofford.

He is survived by his wife Rita of 20 years, and his children, attorney Paul C. (Pat) Murphy IV of Houston and wife Rene, and Kelly Young and her spouse, Scott Young, of the Woodlands. He is also survived by eight grandchildren, Jay, Alex and Sarah Young, Elizabeth, Avery and Will Crofford, and Aiden and Jackson Murphy. He is also survived by his sisters, Barbara Murphy and Kathy Keller, and many nephews and nieces. He is also survived by step-children Cory Seelen and Cricket Pingeon.

In lieu of the normal remembrances, memorial contributions may be directed to the Shriner's Hospital for Children, 6977 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77030-3701.

Tribute Wall



“ *Chief Justice Paul Clarence Murphy III*

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