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James B. Moran, 1930-2009: U.S. district judge

April 22, 2009 | By Trevor Jensen, TRIBUNE REPORTER

U.S. District Judge James B. Moran was nominated for the federal bench in Chicago by President Jimmy Carter and oversaw a busy docket of cases until becoming ill late last year.

A former state legislator and Evanston City Council member, Judge Moran, 78, died of complications from esophageal cancer on Tuesday, April 21, in his home in Evanston, said his son, John.

A partner with the firm of Bell, Boyd & Lloyd (now K&L Gates) for many years, Judge Moran's name was put into consideration for a federal judgeship by then-U.S. Sen. Adlai Stevenson, a fellow member of Harvard Law School's class of 1957.

Carter made the nomination in May 1979, and it was confirmed by the U.S. Senate two months later. Judge Moran was chief judge from 1990 to 1995 when he took senior status but remained active at the court.

Judge Moran got high marks for fairness and clarity in a 2007 evaluation by the Chicago Council of Lawyers, which also remarked on his "patience, good humor and friendly and respectful tone."

"He was a compassionate, conscientious, hardworking person who cared about people," U.S. District Chief Judge James Holderman said. "He was very good in complex intellectual-property cases."

Among Judge Moran's many notable cases was a 1984 decision in which he awarded nearly \$38 million in damages to female flight attendants for United Airlines who were forced to quit in the mid-1960s because of a no-marriage rule later ruled illegal.

Born in Evanston, Judge Moran moved to Escanaba, Mich., after the Depression dealt a blow to his father's investment banking business. He spent summers sailing and racing on Little Bay de Noc and earned money as harbor master for the local yacht club, his son said.

With a scholarship from Pepsi, he received a degree in economics from the University of Michigan. He then joined the Army and saw combat during the Korean War.

Following Harvard Law, he clerked for Judge J. Edward Lumbard of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in New York.

As a private attorney in Chicago, he focused on civil litigation. A liberal Democrat, he also became politically active with organizations including the Independent Voters of Illinois.

In 1965, he was elected to a one-year term as a state representative. Among his fellow lawmakers was Abner Mikva, who early on was surprised to see Judge Moran sign up as co-sponsor of a bill Mikva introduced to eliminate the use of temporary employees to get around patronage rules in Chicago.

"Why not?" said Judge Moran, showing his willingness to buck the Democratic machine.

He was defeated in a bid for re-election.

Mikva later moved to Evanston and remained a friend. He recalled Judge Moran criticizing federal sentencing guidelines that stripped a judge of discretionary powers.

"What I admired about him, he was a very capable and thoughtful judge who recognized you were there to do individual justice," said Mikva, himself a former federal judge.

Judge Moran also was elected to one term as an Evanston alderman in the early 1970s. He worked to successfully loosen the city's temperance laws to help local hotels and restaurants compete. He chose not to run for a second term.

Sailing remained his primary recreational pursuit, and for many years he captained a wooden schooner named *Allegro* out of Monroe Harbor. In the off-season he enlisted a large crew of family and friends -- everyone from fellow attorneys to itinerant carpenters -- to sand, varnish and otherwise keep the boat shipshape.

Judge Moran's first marriage ended in divorce. His second wife, Nancy, died in 1994.

In addition to his son, he is survived by his wife, Janet Remen; three daughters, Jennifer, Sarah and Polly;

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nine stepchildren, Katie Tucker Trippi, Cynthia Tucker, Laura Tucker Giangreco, Michael Tucker, Susan King, Carol Remen, Peggy Tarkington, Lee Remen and Tom Remen; three sisters, Nancy Larson, Susan Schram and Martha Thompson; and 30 grandchildren and step-grandchildren.

Visitation will be from 5 to 8 p.m. Sunday in John Evans Alumni Center, 1800 Sheridan Rd., Evanston. A funeral service will be held at 10 a.m. Monday in St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 939 Hinman Ave., Evanston.

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