



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Judge Spaulding remembered as hard-working, well-respected, a good friend

For immediate release

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Former Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Putnam County) Judge O.C. “Hobby” Spaulding died Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2014. State Police reported he shot himself. He was 69.

He was diagnosed with ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, in 2011. He retired Dec. 31, 2011, after serving as judge for 20 years.

After dating more than thirty-five years, Judge Spaulding married Sixth Judicial Circuit (Cabell County) Judge Jane Husted on Thanksgiving Day 2011. The very informal ceremony took place at the home of long-time friends, former state Senator Oshel Craigo’s oldest daughter, Sabrina, in Boston, Massachusetts, with the Craigo extended family in attendance.

Chief Justice Robin Jean Davis said, “He was a mentor to scores of judges and one of the real deans of the bench. He was always true to the rule of law and to the people he served. He was just a great guy. He will be truly missed by everyone who knew him in the judicial community.”

Justice Margaret L. Workman said, “I am deeply saddened by the loss of a great friend and colleague. We went to law school together and as our careers took similar paths I grew to admire his spirit, humor, intelligence, and kindness. My heart goes out to Janie and to all of the other people who loved and admired Hobby. A bright and shining light has truly left our midst and he will never be forgotten.”

Justice Brent D. Benjamin said, “Judge Spaulding was an outstanding judge and human being. I had the privilege of knowing Hobby as a fellow judge and as a presiding judge while I was in private practice. He was kind, hard-working, brilliant, and, above all, just. I am deeply saddened by his passing. He and his loved ones are in my prayers.”

“Judge Spaulding was an extremely hard-working and respected judge,” said Justice Allen H. Loughry II. “He was a kind and intelligent man who served the citizens of West Virginia with honor. I will miss his quick wit, his sense of humor, and his passion for the law.”

“Hobby Spaulding was one of the most articulate people who ever presided from the bench,” said Supreme Court Administrative Director Steve Canterbury. “It was especially difficult when the Lou Gehrig’s disease began by taking away his ability to

speak. But with good humor, he carried on with the help of a speaking machine, which he would use to type his words. Ultimately the disease progressed to where he could not swallow. For some three years he carried on while being fed through a tube. Ultimately, the disease progressed further and created some other complications and this evening he took a decisive final step.

“He was also a friend of mine,” Director Canterbury said. “And some of the best memories of my life are the deep discussions where we ‘solved all the problems of the world’ while taking long walks in a deep woods.”

Judge Spaulding was elected to the circuit court in 1992 and re-elected in 2000 and 2008. During judicial campaigns, he refused to accept campaign contributions.

He previously served as Putnam County Prosecutor from 1987 to 1992 and assistant prosecutor for ten years before that. He had a private law practice in Teays Valley from 1973 to 1987.

He was born in Fairmont and grew up in Huntington. He spent one year at Marshall University before graduating from the University of Kentucky in 1967 and West Virginia University College of law in 1973.

Judge Spaulding received the Children’s Justice Task Force’s Extra Mile Award and he received outstanding contribution awards from the Prosecuting Attorneys Association and the Public Defenders Corporation.

In 2013, the O.C. Spaulding Training Center at the Putnam County Youth Reporting Center was named in his honor.

Chief Justices appointed him several times to serve on the Supreme Court when a Justice could not serve on a case. The Supreme Court also appointed Judge Spaulding to serve on the Judicial Investigation Commission and as the judicial representative on legislative commissions on Eyewitness Identification and Residential Placement of Children.

He served as President and Vice-President of the West Virginia Judicial Association and often taught other circuit judges in the state at judicial association meetings.

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