

EDWARD J. KULIG
MEMORIAL

In keeping with long standing tradition, this memorial for Attorney Edward J. Kulig is prepared and respectfully submitted for filing in the records of the Circuit Court for Trempealeau County and the Tri-County Bar Association.

Ed met all of the criteria for the stereotype small town county lawyer - involved in this community, sought after for counsel in many areas other than law and taking interest not only in a client's legal business, but in the clients themselves. He was a man who not only espoused the virtues of courtesy, but practiced courtesy with a passion - especially among his fellow attorneys. Tri-County Bar Members were always met with an outstretched hand and often with a greeting announcing that he was Ed Kulig, "....from over on poverty row at Independence".

Ed Kulig was born April 20, 1913 in the same Independence neighborhood where he would later return with his wife to raise their two daughters. He lived there until his death 88 years later on December 11, 2001. He was one of the last of surviving attorneys to have started his law practice prior to World War II, having graduated from Marquette University Law School in 1936. He began his practice of law in Lancaster, Wisconsin where he met Katherine, his wife to be. He enlisted in the Navy and served

during World War II stationed with military units on islands off the north coast of South American protecting shipping routes for the war effort.

In 1946 he joined his father, John Kulig, at the Independence law practice John had established in 1898. When John retired in 1959, Ed continued as a sole practitioner until 1973 when he hired two new law school graduates – Robert Luethi and LaVerne Michalak. While he was in the process of gradually reducing his work load, a stroke in 1997 abruptly ended his law practice.

Ed was an active and tireless supporter of his community and church during his 50 plus adult years at Independence. He was a founding member and officer of the local Lion's Club and the Independence Development Corporation. He was a long time member of the Independence Fire Department, the American Legion, the Knights of Columbus, and the Bank Board of Directors. His civic involvement included such activities as setting off the fireworks shows for the City's annual celebration, serving over 10 years on the Trempealeau County Board and as Chairman of it's Property Committee.

Personal interests of his included coin collecting, timber management, hunting and fishing. One annual outing which covered a span of over 40 years was his "Armistice Day" November 11th trips to the Mississippi River.

For many years he was joined there by fishing companions - Eau Claire trial attorney Bill Adler and Eau Claire City Manager Ray Wachs. The day always started with a hardy breakfast at the Kulig house which included a bowl of grapefruit sections served in brandy.

Another interest of Eds was the stock market. He expanded on his father's investments and had a reputation among his fellow attorneys as being very successful in this venture. As common as law books in the office were such publications as Forbes and Barrons – and of course the daily edition of the Wall Street Journal, which was one of the first pieces of mail to be inspected each day.

In addition to a successful private practice, Ed also served as a part-time Assistant District Attorney for 5 years in the 1970's and held the position of State Public Administrator for Trempealeau County, assisting with the collection of estate taxes from 1957 until the late 1970's when the position was abolished. This job occasionally involved trips into the countryside looking for unreported estate assets and, on one occasion, a threat to "blow" a safe if the deceased's family didn't produce the combination for it.

Lawyer Ed, as he was sometimes referred to in the community, was well respected among the locals and was often approached for counsel in

matters other than strictly legal issues. He made himself readily accessible to people. He rarely was out of town for more than two or three days at a time, having no interest in extended vacations. His partners only once saw him miss work for more than one day due to illness. His primary practice of probate, tax and real estate work kept him in the office where he would routinely see people who walked in without appointments. He was a people person and enjoyed visiting with his clients about their activities. Income tax papers were often filled out while the client sat in his office, and conversations would sometimes lead to other legal work such as the drafting of a Will. As late as the early 90's simple wills were often typed by him on his manual Underwood typewriter while clients waited. With many of Ed's more elder clients, discussions were conducted in the Polish language, as many of the people who settled the Independence area were of that nationality and Ed could speak the language well enough to communicate.

Ed was an easy going, casual individual, easy to talk to and always pleasant. He dressed casually for the office and operated in simple quarters from behind a table-style desk that his father had used before him. He usually drove a pick-up truck, always arrived early for court and appointments, and never appeared rushed.

He would routinely come to the office 7 days a week, although maybe only an hour or two on Saturday and Sunday. However, he would seldom report to the office on the Holy Days of the Catholic Church, admonishing those of us who worked those days, that we would be “....going straight to hell”. He was a conservative person, not inclined to change his surroundings, but was quick to do so when circumstances justified it. For example, within a 3 year period in the early 70’s he bought a commercial building, remodeled it and moved out of his second story quarters where the law office had been located for 60 years. He then finished off this spurt of activity by taking the bold measure of hiring two attorneys in the same year to fill the new space.

Ed always put people at ease and had a repertoire of comments and one-liners for all sorts of situations. When someone advocated some preemptive action to deal with a potential problem, the advice was often to “let sleeping dogs lie”, or if he found one of the partners working late in the office he would remind him that “even horses can die of hard work”. Following an initial exchange of greetings you might hear him encourage conversation with his invitation to “give me some words of wisdom”. When going out to dinner, in response to a waitress inquiry as to whether anyone wanted a drink before dinner his answer might be, “we didn’t come here to

pray". And, with his characteristic humility, when asked by his fellow attorneys how the law business was in Independence, you might hear him comment that he was surviving off "crumbs that fell from the table at Kostner's law office in Arcadia".

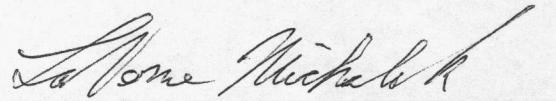
The success of the Tri-County Bar Association was a high priority for Ed. During the years before his stroke he never missed a Tri-County meeting. Each year in May Ed would load up his lawn mower and other assorted tools on his truck and head for the association's cabin at Lake Pepin for cleanup day. For many years he made arrangements for the "Polish cleaning ladies" who helped get the cabin ready for the summer season. Long before the courts and the State Bar were discussing the loss of civility among attorneys, Ed was a strong advocate of maintaining courtesy among attorneys and people in general. He felt the activities of the Association were an important part of developing good working relations and took pride in how members of the Tri-County could rely on each others word.

When he was Treasurer of the Association he accelerated the payment of the debt on the cabin by unilaterally inserting a hidden surcharge on everyone's summer meeting bill, a practice which reflected his own office philosophy of keeping a "large cushion" in the office account and having a "no accounts receivable" policy.

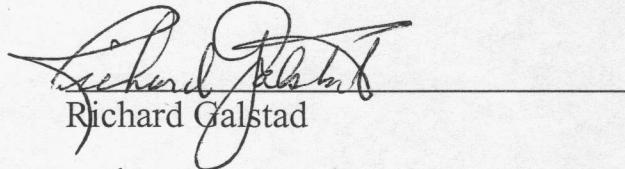
One of Ed's many signature comments was often heard as he would part company with a group of people or some individual with whom he was visiting. "Carry on" he would say as he would leave - and so we shall now that Ed has left our company - hopefully having learned something from him about good temperament, courtesy and serving others.

Respectfully submitted this 14th day of January, 2005.

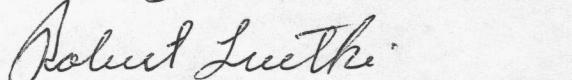
EDWARD J. KULIG MEMORIAL
COMMITTEE:



LaVerne Michalak



Richard Galstad



Robert Luethi

