

IN MEMORY OF FREDERIC J. BERNNS

Presented to the Tri-County Bar Association on August 30, 2018

We submit this memorial in honor of Frederic J. Berns to be made a part of the records for the circuit Court of Trempealeau County and the minutes of the Tri-County Bar Association.

Frederic J. Berns was born to Leo and Ruth Berns on July 10, 1945, in Pana, Illinois. He grew up on the family farm with his siblings, John, Elizabeth, and Theresa who survive him along with his partner of many years, Debra Oates. He died on October 25, 2017, after a courageous battle against cancer.

Fred obtained his law degree from the University of Illinois in 1972 and came to Whitehall shortly thereafter in 1972 to join the law firm of Tarrant, Mattka and Robertson. In keeping with the practice of the firm to operate satellite offices, he opened an office Pigeon Falls. The firm subsequently operated as Mattka, Robertson and Berns, and then Mattka, Robertson, Berns and Ohm. Fred then ventured out on his own as a solo practitioner in Whitehall from 1982 until his death.

Fred was a faithful member of the Tri-County Bar. He even was unanimously elected to serve as President in 1989. But it's very fitting that this memorial be presented on this Thursday evening of the summer bar meeting because for many years, Fred was the chairman and master of ceremonies for the Thursday post dinner "tributes" and stories he shared with all. He had a subtle wit and droll sense of humor.

Fred was not one to brag or boast of his many accomplishments and service. He led by example. He served in the US Army reserves obtaining the rank of Captain, led high school youth and close friends on journeys to Europe, served on the Whitehall School Board, and was active in Badger Boys State including serving two years as Executive Director. Boys State and numerous other organizations benefited by his serving as a volunteer.

He also served the Trempealeau County Court system as a Court Commissioner and especially as Juvenile Court Commissioner for many years.

He was competitive without being combative in life and in law. He served his clients well (although we'd guess it may have taken him some time to retrieve a file or two). We never heard a complaint or negative comment about his preparedness or competence.

He was a stained glass artist, poet, and photographer. Also of note was the knowledge and selection of imported beers he brought to the summer meeting. He knew our priorities.

The November issue of the Badger Legionnaire, the official publication of the Wisconsin American Legion, noted his passing. Two quotes that were Fred's mottos stood out: "You will be known by the company you keep." and "The seeds that you sow, you may never see grow." Fred not only saw seeds that did grow and flourish, but left others that will grow due to his leadership and example.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Brovold

Allan Ohm

Alan Robertson