

A Memorial to:

JUDGE JOSEPH RIEDNER

Presented by the Members of the
Tri-County Bar Association
January 14, 2000

Joseph Riedner's legal career started in the great depression of the 1930's and throughout his life he exemplified the basic values, perseverance and work ethic of those whose lives were molded by the early 1900's.

Joe was born into a hard working and deeply religious farming family. One of eight children, Joe was born on July 19, 1904 at Bird Island, Minnesota. Farming was marginal at best and could not support the family so they moved to Centuria, Wisconsin near St. Croix Falls where Joe was raised.

When Joe was high school age, his hard working and deeply religious family sent him to Campion Academy, an excellent Jesuit school at Prairie du Chien. After his graduation from Campion Academy they sent him to Creighton University at Omaha, Nebraska. Again a Jesuit college with impressive credentials. After graduation from Creighton he then attended and graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School at Madison, Wisconsin. All in all, an impressive achievement for his family and for Joe, again made possible only by hard work, sacrifice and perseverance.

And after all of this Joseph Riedner graduated in 1931, in the heart of the great depression which was paralyzing the economy of our country. Joe started his law practice in 1931 with an excellent tutor, Tom Doar of the prestigious law firm of Doar and McNally at New Richmond. Joe spent 2 years with Tom Doar who also served as President of the State Bar during this period and who was a widely respected trial attorney. In 1933 Tom Doar brought another young lawyer into the firm, Warren Knowles, who later served as governor of the State of Wisconsin. So Joe Riedner's legal career started with a State Bar President and a future Governor of Wisconsin. Many years later when that Law Firm celebrated it's 100th Anniversary both Judge Riedner and the former Governor Knowles were present and visiting. Judge Riedner remarked to Governor Knowles, "Gosh, I was only receiving \$50.00 a month in those years." Governor Knowles, quickly responded, "think nothing of it Joe, that is all I was receiving too."

In 1933, with the addition of Warren Knowles to the firm Joe felt his opportunity to advance was limited. When the opportunity came to move in with a widely known Menomonie trial attorney Joe decided to do so. The Menomonie trial attorney was the legendary Willis Donley, who for years was one of the best known and respected trial attorneys in Wisconsin. Joe practiced with Willis Donely from 1933 to 1937 in Menomonie.

In 1937, Joe was desirous of striking out on his own. He heard that Durand, Wisconsin was an area that could perhaps support a new young lawyer. And so with his pregnant wife, Madalyn, a New Richmond girl he had married in 1934, Joe moved to Durand and "hung out his shingle." In those years most country lawyers were sole practitioners and built their business up from scratch, opening an office and toughing it out while their business grew and developed, a particularly difficult feat in the 30's but one experienced by many attorneys of that vintage. Offices frequently were upstairs where rent was cheaper and Joe's office was above "Noll's Tavern" until he became Judge.

In 1938 Joe became City Attorney for the City of Durand and remained City Attorney until he became Judge. Also in 1938 he was elected to public office for the first time, serving as District Attorney of Pepin County from 1938 to 1940.

In 1943 Joe successfully ran for County Judge of Pepin County against the incumbent Judge Richardson. He subsequently held office as County Judge of Pepin County from January 1, 1944 to January 1, 1962, a period of 18 years at which time he lost his bid for re-election. In his usual persevering and hard working way he then served again as District Attorney from 1962 to 1964 and was re-elected as Judge in the next Judicial election in 1967. He then served as County Judge from January 1, 1968 to January 1, 1974, an additional 6 years for a total of 24 years of service as Pepin County Judge.

During this last term of office the State Legislature was in the early stages of Court reorganization and the legislature passed a bill combining Pepin County and Buffalo County for Judicial purposes. As Judge Riedner was to reach the usual judicial retirement age of 70 at the end of his term, the effective date of this legislation was timed to coincide with the completion of his term of office as Judge. Judge Riedner accordingly not only served as County Judge of Pepin County for 24 years but also served as the last sole Judge of Pepin County.

Following his retirement as a full time Judge, he then accepted appointment as Family Court Commissioner for Pepin County utilizing his years of judicial experience in that category. Judge Riedner also continued to act as a Reserve Judge, accepting assignments by the Court Administrator to fill in as judge in counties in the area and throughout the state.

As with most hard working and successful persons, Joe Riedner's achievements were not however limited only to the law. An ardent lover of nature and the Creator, Joe loved the forest and woods. During his life he was the Johnny Appleseed of pine trees, planting over a quarter million pines in the Pepin County area during his lifetime. In 1982 he received the "Tree Farmer of the Year" award. During his long and productive life he lived to actually walk in many woods and forests he had planted himself. In fact, even in his old age, Joe was always noted for his tall and erect stature, a result of his love for the outdoors and was after referred to as "Indian Joe" by his friends, in honor of his erect stature and love of the outdoors.

Joe also was a land developer creating Riedner's first and second additions to the City of Durand, an area of beautiful lots and homes overlooking downtown Durand.

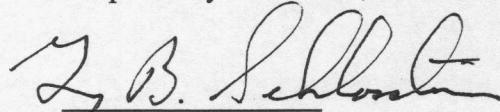
During this period the City of Durand was without a hospital. The Benedictine Sisters expressed interest in building a hospital in Durand. Joe Riedner made it happen by donating a choice and large building site to the Sisters for "the use and benefit of the people of Pepin County." As a result St. Benedict's Hospital became a reality in 1951 on land given by Joseph Riedner and Durand had hospital services for it's people.

Eventually changing rules and a diminishing number of nuns made the hospital difficult for the Benedictine's to continue and it was replaced by the new Chippewa Valley Hospital built only a few blocks away. The excellent St. Benedict's building was then acquired by Pepin County and phase 2 of Riedner's gift for the "use and benefit of the people of Pepin County" became a reality.

In 1983, Pepin County extensively renovated the building and it became the Pepin County Courthouse. How appropriate that it occupies land given by Judge Joseph Riedner, the last sole judge of Pepin County, a judge of that county for 24 years, and land that he gave "for the use and benefit of the people of Pepin County." May his spirit dwell in the halls of that courthouse forever, for it was he that gave it it's present home.

Judge Riedner died on June 8, 1998, just short of 94, having persevered in good times and bad, having never given up in his efforts to do a good job and to make the world better for his fellow man. May we as lawyers serve the people as well as he, may we weather the good and the bad as he did and may we honor his example and his memory.

Respectfully submitted,



Judge Gary B. Schlosstein
Memorial Chairman

Presented at the Mid-Winter meeting of the Tri-County Bar Association this 14th day of January, 2000, moved for adoption, adopted unanimously and filed with the Pepin County Circuit Court as a permanent memorial to Judge Joseph Riedner.

JUDGE JOSEPH H. RIEDNER (1904 - 1998)

Judge Riedner was born in Bird Island, MN on July 19, 1904. At an early age his family moved to Centuria, WI where they farmed. He attended a small rural elementary school in the area, graduated from high school at Campion Academy in Prairie du Chien and from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. He then attended the University of Wisconsin Law School in Madison, WI receiving his law degree in 1931.

Graduating in the heart of the depression, Joe Riedner entered the practice of law in the office of a legendary old time member of the bar and past state bar president, Tom Doar, in New Richmond, WI at the going salary of the time of \$50 a month! He practiced with the firm of McNally and Doar in New Richmond from 1931 to 1933. In 1933 another new attorney, Warren Knowles, later Governor of the State of Wisconsin, joined the firm also at the beginning salary of \$50 a month and Joe Riedner moved to Menomonie, WI where he practiced law until 1937.

In the spring of 1937 Joe Riedner opened a law office in Durand, WI. He became City Attorney for Durand in 1938, and was elected District Attorney of Pepin County in 1938. In 1940 he initiated and commenced the Pepin County Abstract Company. In the spring of 1948 Joe Riedner was elected Judge of Pepin County defeating the incumbent W. C. Richardson. He then began a long and impressive judicial career as County Judge, Circuit Judge, and Reserve Judge encompassing over four decades.

Judge Riedner's greatest contribution was that he was truly a peoples judge. A product of rural America and with a judicial jurisdiction in a rural and relatively low

population area, Judge Riedner was able to truly know most of the people of his area. In present days Judges normally recuse themselves when they know one or more of the parties. In Judge Riedner's day and in his Pepin County jurisdiction he would almost always know the parties or at least their relatives and friends. He brought a down to earth human hands on touch to the Court and tailored his decisions to the needs and problems of "his people". His homespun decisions were rarely appealed, never reversed and only one was modified in his entire career.

During his legal career, Judge Riedner practiced law as a member of a law firm and as a solo practice. He held appointive positions as City Attorney for Durand, Pepin County Divorce Counsel and Family Court Commissioner for Pepin County. He was elected as President of the Dunn-Pepin Bar Association and as President of the Tri-County Bar Association. He held elective public positions as District Attorney for Pepin County for 2 terms, as Pepin County Judge and as Circuit Judge for Pepin County.

As usual with successful persons he was also active outside of his law profession. An energetic and 4th degree member of the Knights of Columbus, he formulated and was on the governing board as President or Vice President of the Wisconsin Knights of Columbus Foundation from 1960 to 1975, a beneficent foundation engaged in the guarantee of student loans. As with many to whom much is given, Judge Riedner also gave back to his community. When a new hospital was to be built in Durand, Judge Riedner donated an extensive site next to the golf course. Since that time a newer hospital has replaced it. The former hospital was extensively renovated and Judge Riedner's gift lives on appropriately as the present Pepin County Courthouse and Government Center.

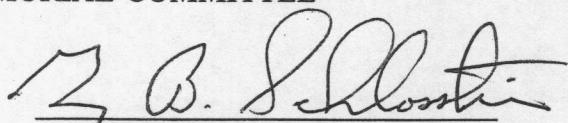
His greatest private love, after his family was forestry and he was heavily engaged throughout his life in extensive tree planting and forestry management, planting during the course of his life over a quarter million trees. Like Johnny Appleseed he left a living legacy to Pepin County.

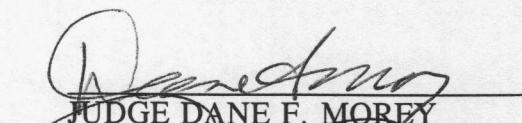
Judge Riedners life started in the age of horse and buggy and ended in the jet age. He saw a time of unparalleled change in the lives of the ordinary man and in the practice of law. His guiding light and his legacy to us was his deep faith in the inherent goodness and potential of every person in his constituency. As we engage in the practice of law, may we all learn from him and strive to enable every persons life to be as effective and rewarding as possible.

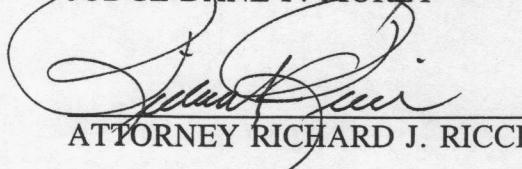
This memorial was presented a the summer meeting of the Tri-County Bar Association at Deer Island on August 20, 1998. By unanimous vote the members of the Tri-County Bar Adopt and file this memorial in the permanent records of the Pepin County Circuit Court in honor of the memory of Judge Joseph H. Riedner.

JUDGE JOSEPH H. RIEDNER
MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

By:


JUDGE GARY B. SCHLOSSTEIN


JUDGE DANE F. MOREY


ATTORNEY RICHARD J. RICCI

CIRCUIT COURT
Pepin County, Wis.
FILED

SEP 11 1998

Rosemary L. Carlile
CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT