Judge P. C. Joslin Dies

Judge Philip C. Joslin, retired associate justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court, died early today at Bay Harbor Island, Fla. He was 75 years old.

Judge Joslin retired in 1958, after 26 years on the bench, because of failing health. He had lived in Florida the last year of his illness but maintained his home at 130 Woodbury St., Providence.

Before his appointment as judge in 1932, he was active in Republican politics, serving first on the Providence School Committee from 1911 to 1914 and as a state representative from 1915 to 1926. During his last four years in the General Assembly, he was speaker of the House.

He was one of the founders of Temple Emanu-El and served as its president from 1924 to 1948.



—From 1950 Photo

Judge Joslin achieved a reputation among Rhode Island lawyers as a jurist and a humanitarian, deeply interested in the rehabilitation of those who came before him on criminal charges.

Presiding in the criminal division of Superior Court for Providence and Bristol Counties, he demonstrated early in his judicial career his philosophy that youthful criminals could be made upstanding citizens through leniency and probation in their first offenses.

"The great majority of wrong-doers (mostly young men, very few women) are between the ages of 17 and 25—usually first offenders," Judge Joslin said in connection with his program of rehabilitation for erring youths. "These young people yield to temptation, sometimes as a result of bad companionship, bad environment, unfortunate home life, and the like; and when they are given a deferred sentence, they are placed in charge of a probation officer to whom they must report periodically, their probation lasting five years.

"No more than one in 20 of those given extreme leniency ever violates his probationary term. If we can save 19 out of 20, I feel it is well worth doing."

He presided in the summer of 1947 in the first of the so-called Providence police-gang trials that ended in a mistrial because it could not be completed by the vacation deadline for jury trials. Due in part to his criticism of the law, the legislature later provided that such trials, once started, should be carried to their conclusions.

Judge Joslin served in 1945-46 on a commission which reviewed divorce laws and procedure and recommended several changes to the legislature.

In June, 1948, he ruled unconstitutional an act calling for the release from jail of anybody sentenced as a deferred sentence violator, whenever new charges held to be violations of deferred sentences did not result in grand jury indictments. Judge Joslin held, and was sustained by the Supreme Court, that the act was an attempt by the legislature to encroach on the prerogatives of the judiciary.

Aside from his family and his service on the bench, Judge Joslin's big interest was the steady development of the congregation Temple Emanu-El. When he retired in 1948 as president, he was named honorary president of the temple for life.

At its annual meeting in December, 1942, Judge Joslin noted proudly that the congregation had responded generously to the call to duty in World War II and that already more than 100 of its young men were in the armed forces.

Judge Joslin was born in New York City, March 8, 1886, a son of Joseph and Jennie Joslin. He came to Providence when a boy, and received his education in the public schools here, graduating from Hope High School in 1908 from Georgetown University Law School. Returning to Providence, he was admitted to practice, and became a member of the law firm of Hahn and Joslin, the senior member having been the late J. Jerome Hahn, who later served in both the Superior and Supreme Courts.

As speaker of the House, Judge Joslin placed the name of Mr. Hahn in nomination before the General Assembly in grand committee for the position of Superior Court judge. He often expressed pride in the fact that he had been given the privilege of nominating for that position the man who gave him a junior partnership in his law firm. In those years, Superior Court judges were selected by the legislature.

Judge Joslin's service as speaker in the house extended through the famous filibuster period of 1923 and 1924.

Judge Joslin was active in the direction of Republican party affairs for years. He was elected to membership in the Republican State Central Committee in 1926 and to the executive committee of that body in 1928, serving in that capacity in subsequent years. He was chairman of Republican state conventions in 1924 and 1928. In 1924 he declined the Republican nomination for lieutenant governor.

Other positions held by Judge Joslin included active vice president of the Rhode Island Jewish Home for the Aged, honorary vice president and former active vice president of the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island, president of the Hebrew Educational Institute, the former name of the Jewish Community Center, of which Judge Joslin became a director; trustee of Miriam Hospital, former chairman of the board of directors of Touro Fraternal Association.

He was a member of Redwood Lodge No. 35, F. and A.M.; Providence Chapter, Royal Arch Masons; Providence Lodge, B.P.O.E.; What Cheer Lodge No. 24, Knights of Pythias; the Republican Club of Rhode Island and the Ledgmont Country Club.

Judge Joslin usually spent the greater part of his summers in Maine. He was an outdoor sports enthusiast and spent much of his vacation time golfing and fishing.

He married Dorothy Aisenberg at Worcester, March 18, 1913. She survives him, with two sons, Alfred H. Joslin, Providence attorney, and Robert L. Joslin of Larchmont, N.Y., a paint manufacturer; a daughter, Mrs. James Salinger of Cincinnati, and seven grandchildren.

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