



Justice Parker Lee McDonald

May 23, 1924 - June 24, 2017

Retired Florida Supreme Court Justice Parker Lee McDonald, 93, passed away Saturday, June 24, 2017, at his home in Tallahassee after a brief illness. At his passing he was surrounded by his wife of 67 years, Velma Ruth, and his children.

He was born in Sebring, FL on May 23, 1924 to Mattie Etheredge and Monroe Reid McDonald and grew up there during the Depression, when he helped support a struggling family by picking fruit and working in a grocery store. After graduation from high school in 1942, he enrolled at the University of Florida, but after one semester he joined the Army in World War II and served in the 20th Armored Division. He later stated that the Army life was good for him, in that through that experience he met, and lived with, men from all walks of life and from all parts of the country and that he “found that from the roughest hillbilly from West Virginia to the aristocrats from Philadelphia no man stands alone but all can bond together to accomplish a common goal. You learned to appreciate and depend on each other with the attendant knowledge that other people were depending on you. This is the way it is in life and I have always sought to carry my part of the bargain.”

After the War he returned to Gainesville and graduated from the University of Florida with his law degree in 1950. Following graduation, he first practiced law in Sebring with his father, then joined the Orlando firm that became Gunter, McDonald and Handley.

He won an appointment in 1961 as a circuit court judge in Orlando. During his

tenure as a circuit court judge, he was appointed at various times by special appointment to sit on each of the District Courts of Appeal. He was serving as chief judge of the Ninth Circuit Court in Orlando when Governor Bob Graham appointed him to the Florida Supreme Court in 1979. He served as chief justice for a two-year term in 1986-88 and retired from the court in 1994. During his 15 years on the state's highest court, he was known for his integrity and plain-spokenness, and quickly obtained the nickname the "Whistling Judge" for his habit of whistling in the Supreme Court building. Among his most significant opinions was one in 1984 that set a national precedent barring racial discrimination in the selection of jurors in criminal cases, which position was later adopted by the U.S. Supreme Court. He administered the Oath of Office to Governor Bob Martinez and to Governor Wayne Mixon. It was during college that he met his wife during a weekend visit with his younger sister at Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee. They dated for three years, and in 1949, just after her graduation and six weeks before his, they married. It was timed so they could have a two-week vacation together at Christmas.

Born into a loving, Christian home, he remained active in his hometown United Methodist church his entire life. While in Orlando, he raised his family in The First United Methodist Church where he taught Sunday School and led the singing in the Men's Bible Class. Upon moving to Tallahassee in 1979 he became a member of Trinity United Methodist Church. He and his wife, Ruth, passed those values to his family. All of his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren attend and participate in a church.

He is survived by his wife, Velma Ruth, his four children Martha Rebecca Morcom (Thomas Morcom), Bruce L. McDonald (Paula), Robert R. McDonald (Patricia), and Ruth Ann High (Robert K. High, Jr.), eight grandchildren David T. Morcom, Daniel P. Morcom (Sharon), Bruce L. McDonald, Jr. (Alisha), Mitchell C. McDonald (Meghan), Laura McDonald Dennis (Brett Dennis), Bryan P. McDonald, Jennifer High Cottingham (Craig Cottingham), and Robert K. High, III (Niki), and by three great grandchildren, Marisa Morcom, Maria

Morcom, and Matilda Dennis. He was predeceased by two brothers, Monroe Etheredge and Donald Bruce, and is survived by his brother, Howard, and his sister, Martha Vail Pownall.

He will lie in State at the Florida Supreme Court on Thursday, June 29, from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., when his family will receive visitors. A memorial service will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church, Tallahassee, Saturday, July 1, beginning at 11:00 a.m., with a reception to follow in Moor Hall. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in his name to Trinity United Methodist Church, the Help Each Other fund, or to the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society.

Previous Events

Lie in State

JUN 29. 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Florida Supreme Court Rotunda
500 South Duval Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Memorial Service

JUL 1. 11:00 AM (ET)

Trinity United Methodist Church
120 West Park Avenue
Tallahassee, FL 32303

Reception for family and friends following the service

JUL 1. 12:00 PM (ET)

Trinity United Methodist Church
120 West Park Avenue
Tallahassee, FL 32303

Tribute Wall



“ *Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Justice Parker Lee McDonald.*



June 28, 2017 at 04:12 PM



“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*



Mark Miller - June 28, 2017 at 08:58 AM

“ It is with fond memories, that I express the opportunity I had, many years ago, of practicing law before, then, Orange Circuit Judge McDonald. I was a fresh attorney shortly out of law school.

I was representing a young black father of 2 minor children in a divorce. He desired custody of his son, his daughter's custody to remain with her mother. This was then known as "split custody" and very strongly disfavored by the courts.

So, one day, walking to the now former Orange County Courthouse, I met along the way a much more experienced attorney I had previously met and we discussed briefly where I was going and the issues involved. His reply to my upcoming hearing for "split custody," was something akin to "no way in hell." Well, Judge McDonald granted split custody to my client father and that was never appealed. The law in this area has changed significantly since.

Also, much later in my practice, I erred in agreeing to represent my step father in law in a alimony dispute with a former wife of his, case pending in Volusia County. The Circuit Judge who I later discovered was an active alcoholic (and, had held several defense attorneys in a criminal case in contempt) found my overly zealous representation to be contemptuous and had me sent to jail. My wife at the time, knew of Justice McDonald, who was then on The Supreme Court of Florida, and frantically called him. His comforting advice at the time: "Tell Roy he should not be throwing rocks inside a glass house." The contempt charges were appealed and the rest of the story is irrelevant.

Justice McDonald was a brilliant jurist and a thoughtful, warm hearted man of temperance and good heart. God Bless Him and his Family.

Roy L. Glass, Esquire

Roy L. Glass - June 27, 2017 at 10:18 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Justice Parker Lee McDonald.*



June 26, 2017 at 06:53 PM



“ *A wise man. Loved his family. Recognized value in everyone he met. He brought a lot of joy into this world.*

Ruthann High - June 26, 2017 at 03:33 PM