

The Honorable Richard J. Elrod

(Memorial)

By Adam J. Sheppard

“ *Tamim*) – a Hebrew word meaning “of unassailable integrity.” That was the Honorable Richard J. Elrod.

Judge Elrod dedicated his entire life to public service. After graduating from Northwestern University Law School in 1958, he began his legal career as assistant corporation counsel for the City of Chicago. Seven years later he was the City’s chief prosecutor.

In 1969, Judge Elrod was elected as a state representative. He then served four terms as the Cook County Sheriff (1970 to 1986). His service in that capacity was distinguished not only by his personal integrity but by the professionalism which he brought to that office. As Sheriff, he instituted innovative reforms, including a Merit Board for the selection of sworn personnel and a Youth Services Division which gained national recognition by President Reagan. It was no surprise that, in 1983, Judge Elrod was elected as president of the 3,000-member National Sheriff’s Association.

In 1986, Judge Elrod was appointed a Senior Assistant Attorney General. Two years later, he joined the judiciary as a Circuit Court of Cook County judge, a position he held until his recent death.

Judge Elrod presided over a trial call in the Law Division. He prided himself in sound evidentiary rulings. His colleagues also heralded him for his efficacy in pretrial settlement conferences. “He had prepared for the conference and read all materials. He asked the parties questions about their cases and pointed out challenges for each party if it went to trial. He listened to all parties involved and was instrumental in his guidance in getting the parties to a fair settlement,” recalls Daniel Cotter, newly installed President of the Chicago Bar Association.

Judge Elrod also took particular pride in his Decalogue membership. As a young lawyer, he joined Decalogue in the late 1950’s. In 2012, he was the recipient of Decalogue’s Lifetime Achievement Award. Beyond his roles as an accomplished and admired public official and a member of the judiciary, Judge Elrod instilled in his family members the ideals embodied by the Decalogue Society of Lawyers. Today, his son Steven (managing partner at Holland & Knight), his grandson Daniel (newly admitted attorney at Katten/Muchin), his nephew Barry Sheppard, and great nephew Adam Sheppard (both of the Sheppard Law Firm, P.C.) – are proud Decalogue members who aspire to perpetuate the great legacy of the Honorable Richard J. Elrod whose absence from the legal community will be deeply felt by so many who revered this great but humble public servant.