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C. William O'Neill

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C. WILLIAM O'NEILL

*Leonard J. Stern**

Since the untimely death on August 20, 1978, of Chief Justice C. William O'Neill, all of us privileged to know him or to work with him feel the sorrow which thousands of Ohioans of all walks of life manifested at his passing. Our grief is neither formal nor perfunctory.

Bill O'Neill had that courage and admired that courage captured in the words of the late President John F. Kennedy:

In whatever arena of life one may meet the challenge of courage, whatever may be the sacrifices he faces if he follows his conscience—the loss of his friends, his fortune, his contentment, even the esteem of his fellow men—each man must decide for himself the course he will follow. . . . For this each man must look into his own soul.¹

It was on this high plane that the Chief Justice conducted his entire professional and political life—as a legislator, Attorney General, Governor, and the highest judicial officer in Ohio.

He had a fine sense of human and humane values. He knew what was real in life and what was sham. He was at all times a patient and good listener. He believed in efficient, prompt, and, above all, fair administration of justice. He had the rare ability to discern the essence of a legal issue. His writings in the Ohio State Reports reflect this ability. When he assumed the office of Chief Justice, he set as a primary goal that Ohio courts have the best record for disposing of litigation of any industrial state. He admonished that the quality of justice should never be impaired, and he lived to see that goal achieved and maintained. His was a long and distinguished career of public service postulated upon the highest ideals of the legal profession.

Many of us are saddened by his loss because our lives were enriched by his warmth, his friendliness, and his consideration for

* Member of the Disciplinary Counsel of the Supreme Court of Ohio. Former member of the Supreme Court of Ohio.

1. J. KENNEDY, *PROFILES IN COURAGE* 246 (1956).

others. Future members of the legal profession will find, in his dedication and devotion to the law, the leadership of one whose personality was rich in wisdom and understanding and in tolerance and compassion. The contributions of C. William O'Neill will always be recognized as an integral part of the legal system of Ohio.