

# Federal judge John Manos, is dead at 83

Jurist is called fair, stern

JOHN CANIGLIA  
Plain Dealer Reporter

U.S. District Judge John M. Manos, for decades recognized as the sternest jurist in Cleveland, died Thursday morning in his sleep at home in Lakewood. He was 83.

Manos served as a judge for 43 years. Lawyers who practiced before him daily said he earned a well-known reputation for fairness, preparation and toughness.

"He demonstrated the most remarkable pursuit of excellence by a jurist that I've ever seen," said Robert Ducatman, an attorney for Jones Day in Cleveland and a former clerk for Manos.

"I've never seen anyone work as hard or study as much. He was simply the quintessential jurist. He is what every judge should aspire to be."

In an interview in 2002 with The Plain Dealer, Manos described his passion for his job.



Manos

**"He was the most prominent Greek-American in the city. To look at him, it was intimidating. If I was a defendant in his courtroom, I would have been terrified. But he was very kind. He was always willing to help anyone."**

The Rev. Stephen Callos,  
pastor, SS. Constantine and Helen Greek  
Orthodox Cathedral, Cleveland Heights

**"He was the roughest, toughest judge in Cleveland. But no one had a bigger heart."**

Avery Friedman,  
Cleveland attorney

**"He was a giant in the legal profession. He was a very bright guy who loved the law. He had an incredible capacity to work. The hours he put in, that was his life, and he was the best."**

Gregory White,  
U.S. attorney

"I love the excitement," he said. "I love to prepare. My quest is for accuracy. Before I go on the bench, I'm prepared. Before I have a pretrial, I'm prepared. Preparation is the most important factor in decision-making."

Manos was the son of Greek immigrants. He graduated from Lincoln High School in Cleveland and went on to the Case School of Applied Science, where he starred as the quarterback and captain of the football team. He graduated in 1944 with a degree in metallurgical engineering. He served in the U.S. Navy for about two years and then began working as an engineer in Cleveland.

While working, he took night classes at Cleveland Marshall Law School, graduating in 1950. He worked as an attorney for 13 years before Ohio Gov. James Rhodes selected him to fill a vacancy in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court.

A few years later, Manos and others created a scholarship for Greek students heading to college. Since that time, Manos' Cleveland chapter of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association paid out more than \$300,000 in scholarships, based on academic and extracurricular achievements.

Manos solicited much of the money. The winners included former President Clinton aide George Stephanopoulos of Orange.

"In the Greek community, he was a pillar," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Alex Rokakis.

In 1969, Manos was appointed to the 8th Ohio District Court of Appeals. In 1976, President Gerald Ford chose him for the federal bench. His reputation grew quickly.

"He was a powerful intellect with a powerful personality and a powerful physical presence," said Cleveland attorney Robert Duvin. "He dominated a courtroom. For the lawyers who practiced in front of him, there will never be a replacement for John Manos. He was a great judge and a great man."

He demanded lawyers prepare before they stepped into his courtroom, whether the hearing was part of a major civil trial or simple pretrial.

"Pity the poor attorney who raises an objection in Manos' courtroom and is unable to state the basis," Rokakis wrote in a profile of Manos for the Federal Lawyer magazine. "The attorney is likely to be scolded, as Manos cites chapter and verse of the Federal Rules of Evidence."

In 1981, Manos handled Mobil Corp.'s attempt to acquire Marathon Oil. The Wall Street Journal called him "a courtroom general" and wrote about his toughness. The judge later ruled that Mobil's \$6.5 billion attempt would violate federal antitrust laws.

A few years after the case, Manos began another passion: teaching. He started an internship program that gave students across the country a chance to work on his staff.

Manos taught them the law and made them research it. During trials, they sat in his courtroom and dissected attorneys' arguments.

"I get a big kick out of working with youngsters," Manos said. "They pick up a lot of experience that they wouldn't learn in school."

Manos also mentored young attorneys for decades. In 1984, a young associate with Jones Day appeared before Manos in a trial on product liability. Kate O'Malley said Manos began helping her soon after.

"Every time I went before him, he was very demanding of me," O'Malley said. "I thought that he was just tough on me. But later, I realized that he was working to make me a better lawyer. He reached out to me, and he would talk a lot. He helped me with career decisions."

Later, O'Malley became Manos' colleague, as a judge in U.S. District Court. He remained a father figure to her.

"He would call or show up in the office and say, 'You're not letting these things get to you, are you?'" O'Malley said. "He always seemed to know the right moment for that. He always was there for advice and counsel. I always hear stories that 'John Manos was so tough.' To me, he was quite soft. He was great."

In 1989, Manos' wife of 44 years, Viola, died. He kept working with the support of his brother Eli, a Cleveland lawyer, and his four children — Donna,

## John M. Manos

1922 — 2006

**Survivors:** daughters, Donna Uebler of Chillicothe, Ill.; Christine McLaughlin of Cleveland Heights; sons, Michael of Shaker Heights, and Keith of Willoughby; 12 grandchildren; a brother; and longtime companion Gloria Donahue.

**Services:** 11 a.m., Monday, St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, 22909 Center Ridge Road, Westlake.

**Contributions:** Area Greek Orthodox churches.

**Arrangements:** Yurch Funeral Home, 5618 Broadview Road, Parma.

Christine, Michael and Keith, as well as his grandchildren. He underwent heart surgery in 1995 and assumed senior status, in which he handled a lighter caseload than other judges.

Because he was on senior status, a new judge will not be named to the federal bench.

Manos' health began to decline in 2002, when surgeons removed two toes because of diabetes. Three years later, he underwent surgery for a broken hip he suffered in a fall.

Through it all, he kept working.

He was hospitalized in early 2006 as doctors amputated his left leg from below the knee. He even conducted a pretrial hearing from his hospital bed.

"He had a great intellect, a legendary work ethic and a great love of the law," said Patrick McLaughlin, Manos' son-in-law and a prominent Cleveland attorney. "The bottom line is that they just don't make many like him any more."