

Manford Rainwater Was Lawyer for Downtrodden.(Obituary)

Albuquerque Journal (Albuquerque, NM) | November 28, 1997

Byline: Paul Logan Journal Staff Writer

Country lawyer Manford **Rainwater** was once described as having the folksy voice of a Sam Ervin and a physical resemblance to Clarence Darrow.

A Tucumcari attorney for 54 years, **Rainwater** was known for his love of the law and defending "the downtrodden and the underdog," said former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Stanley F. Frost.

Though a nonsmoker, **Rainwater** died Nov. 20 of lung cancer. He was 84.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. on Dec. 5 in Tucumcari at a place to be determined.

"Manford had a unique personality," said Frost, who was a District Court judge for many of **Rainwater**'s cases. "The law was his life. He really enjoyed coming to court. He had a great social conscience."

In a 1987 Albuquerque Journal story, **Rainwater** said his dad, a railroader of German descent, wanted him to be an undertaker and his mom, a teacher, wanted him to be a preacher, "so I compromised."

He graduated from the University of New Mexico and earned a law degree at the University of Oklahoma.

In the late 1940s, **Rainwater** ran for district attorney and then for district judge, losing both elections. He won three terms in the state House of Representatives in the mid-1950s.

Rainwater's great-nephew, UNM law professor Kip Bobroff, said many people have spoken to him about how his great-uncle wasn't concerned about money or the color of a client's skin.

"If you needed a lawyer, he was willing to represent you," Bobroff said. "He would fight like a bulldog to the point where a lot of attorneys didn't like to be up against him.

"I can remember him driving over from Tucumcari and giving my family a carload of toilet paper because one of his clients paid him that way."

Rainwater once said he didn't chase down a due bill because he would "rather win than make money. I'm a poor loser."

Bobroff credited his great-uncle for helping inspire him to become a lawyer.

"He was somebody who always cared a lot about justice," Bobroff said. "And he showed me being a lawyer is all about doing justice."

Survivors also include his sisters, Helen Narges, of Tucumcari, and Dorothy Durrett, of Farmington.

PHOTO: b/w

RAINWATER: Tucumcari attorney for 54 years

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