



I got to know Jim Buchele through Rotary, but I had heard of him long before that. I heard about Jim Buchele from social work colleagues who knew of his work as a family law judge for Shawnee County District Court. Social workers liked Jim because of his approach to the cases which came before him. He knew he was seeing basically good people at their worst and decided it was better to work with them to find a better outcome for the couple and most especially for children. Under guidelines he developed, mandatory attendance at a workshop for divorcing parents was implemented as well as supervised exchange of children. Jim felt he had a chance to

help people in family law more so than criminal law. He felt there was a real possibility to help even if only to end a marriage that had gone bad. He believed that on-going conflict between mother and father was very harmful to the children and he put their interests first.

Jim also handled criminal law. I vividly remember being a prospective juror in his courtroom one day. When I was called during the jury selection process I was asked if I remembered the questions they had been asking other potential jurors. I replied that I did and went on to say that I did not know either of the attorneys involved in the case, none of the witnesses or the defendant, but I did know the judge. It was one of those days where the attorney questioning me engaged his mouth before his brain and he said, "Well since you know Judge Buchele does that mean that you are more or less likely to trust what he says to be correct and true." My reply was that if it came out of Judge Buchele's mouth that it would not only be true but it would be in everyone's best interest to pay attention. I did not look at Jim when I said that but weeks later he told me that he almost laughed when I answered.

Jim had a distinguished career in public service including 18 ½ years as a Judge in Shawnee County. He also served as US Attorney for Kansas, City Attorney for Topeka and as Chief of Staff for Representative Martha Keys of the 2nd Congressional District. He served four terms as a state representative in the Kansas Legislature. I was lucky to spend some time with Jim during his last weeks of life. His wife Paula was arranging a wedding for her daughter and needed to be away from home at various times. I went a few times to sit with him. We talked some, I watched him sleep some and would get him water or other things he needed. I also got to attend the Roast that was held for Jim a few weeks before he passed away. He had a great sense of humor and even though he was quite ill he seemed to enjoy every minute of the party in his honor.

Jim was a great Rotary president. He ended meetings with a thought for the day which were often humorous, but always had some great bit of wisdom for us all. I miss Jim, but I often think he is watching over this club and would be pleased to see what it continues to become.