



In Memoriam – Gene Hennig (1947-2015)

August 31, 2015

Gene Hennig, a gifted lawyer who led a lifetime of service, died on Tuesday, August 25th. He was 67 years old. His humanitarian work stretched from Lake Street in Minneapolis to South India, and he was also a passionate law school educator, fondly remembered by many lawyers for his teaching and mentoring.

Gene was the son of Lutheran missionaries and grew up in India, where he completed his high school education at the Kodaikanal International School. He returned to the United States to attend engineering school at Valparaiso University. He became a mechanical engineer and for a short time trained as a Navy pilot, and then attended law school, also at Valparaiso, receiving his J.D. in 1974. Gene practiced law for nearly 40 years.

Gene clerked for the Hon. Walter F. Rogosheske of the Minnesota Supreme Court, and spent three years on the faculty at the Valparaiso University School of Law.

Gene met his wife, Kristie, while at Valparaiso. They were engaged less than three months after their first date. He is father to Emily, Luke, Kate (Scott), and grandfather to Simon (four years). His family has said of him, "Among his many wonderful attributes, he was a man of faith, integrity, loyalty, adventure, silliness, and compassion. He was a well-respected attorney, Uniform Law Commissioner, professor, and mentor. He also devoted much of his life to nonprofit work, especially benefiting the children of India, a country very dear to his heart. He loved to travel, hike and climb mountains, canoe and camp ruggedly, and worship his God."

After teaching law in Indiana, Gene came to Minneapolis and joined Rider Bennett Egan and Arundel, LLP. He moved to Gray Plant Mooty in 2007, where he worked as an attorney for the rest of his career.

An Admired Expert

Gene represented business clients throughout the United States, engaging in a wide spectrum of business endeavors. His practice focused on mergers and acquisitions and corporate finance. He was known for his ability to help solve complex corporate finance problems faced by financial and manufacturing institutions.

Gene's clients admired his legal expertise and keen business judgment, which helped bring transactions to successful conclusions. Many Gray Plant Mooty clients that were originally incorporated by Gene have grown to become substantial businesses in the community.



Gene served the Minnesota business and legal communities in numerous roles, culminating in his service as one of Minnesota's commissioners to the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws—an organization dedicated to improving the American legal system through the adoption of uniform state legislation. Most recently, as a Uniform Law Commissioner, Gene was instrumental in the development and adoption of the Uniform Fiduciary Access to Digital Assets Act, which provides a comprehensive and practical solution to fiduciaries' current challenges in obtaining access to digital assets, everything from photographs and social media to electronic banking and financial records.

A Lifetime of Service

Gene's career left a lasting impact on the local and international community. He was truly dedicated to giving back, actively providing pro bono legal service to lend a hand to those who otherwise could not afford it.

He was also a longtime volunteer and board member with LegalCORPS, a Minnesota organization that connects low-income owners of small businesses and nonprofits with free, high-quality legal services.

In 1987, Gene co-founded the Bethania Kids Foundation, a Christian mission that supports the needs of more than 1,000 destitute children in South India. He also co-founded the Chicago Lake Legal Aid Clinic, which offered free assistance to disadvantaged and underserved locals.

Gene was also a board member of KWI International Inc., which supports two international secondary schools in Asia, and a board member of Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital located in India.

A Dedicated Educator

When Gene was not practicing law, he was found pursuing his second love of teaching, both at the William Mitchell College of Law and the University of St. Thomas School of Law. Since 1979, he taught more than 2,000 aspiring Minnesota lawyers in secured transactions, corporate finance, creditor-debtor rights, and insurance law. Gene will always be remembered fondly by students who continued calling him with questions long after their graduation.

In 2014, Gene was honored with a Lifetime Service Award from the Minnesota State Bar Association Business Law Section. The award recognized Gene for his significant contributions to the bar, Minnesota businesses, and to the community at large. He was also honored with an Excellence in Professional Preparation Award from the University of St. Thomas School of Law and a Lifetime Achievement Award and the Community Service Award from the Valparaiso University Alumni Association. He received numerous other awards recognizing his mentorship, pro bono services, and professionalism.

Gene maintained an active interest in world travel by visiting more than 60 countries, hiking, canoeing, and mountain climbing. He trekked in the Himalayas and has summited or attempted a number of the world's



highest mountains including the Matterhorn, Kilimanjaro, Mont Blanc, Fiji, and Aconcagua.

Funeral and Wake Information

- **Wake:** Wednesday, September 2 from 5-7 PM at Mount Olive Lutheran Church (3045 Chicago Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55407).
- **Funeral:** Thursday, September 3 at 11 AM at Central Lutheran Church (333 S 12th St, Minneapolis, MN 55404) in downtown Minneapolis.