

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

539

IN HONOR OF

THE HONORABLE LESLIE LOUIS MONDELLI

June 24, 1919 - March 21, 2000

Between these dates, the life of Judge Leslie L. Mondelli was that of a devoted servant of the law, the Constitution, his country, and of his Lord and Savior.

Born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, the youngest of six children. He attended the local schools and then received a football scholarship with the University of Pittsburgh, where he graduated in 1940. He participated in extracurricular activities in college and was a member of the football team, where he received high acclaim.

With the advent of World War II, Judge Mondelli joined the United States Army Air Force where he trained as a pilot. During the early years of World War II, when the Japanese military juggernaut was aimed toward Australia, Leslie L. Mondelli was a bomber pilot stationed at Port Moresby in New Guinea, where they daily flew over the Morgan Stanley Mountains to bomb the Japanese bases of Buna and Lae. During this time, the Japanese advance towards Australia was blunted by the efforts of such men as Judge Mondelli flying their B-25 bombers.

After New Guinea, he was then transferred to the China Burma India theater, where his squadron developed a form of low altitude skip-bombing, where they could throw bombs in the caves and tunnels, using a bomber much like an attack aircraft. While on one of these missions, Judge Mondelli's plane was heavily damaged in China, and while returning to his base it was evident that they would not be able to get the plane home. Judge Mondelli ordered his crew to bail out and he performed a deadstick landing on what he thought was an island in a river, only to find that it was filled with stones and that the crew would have probably been killed as the stones penetrated the aircraft. Judge Mondelli then was rescued by Chinese nationalist underground, and through a series of transfers was returned to friendly lines. Judge Mondelli was emaciated as a result of that experience.

While in the United States Air Force, Judge Mondelli met his future wife, Miss Frances Kelso. They were married in 1945. Frances Mondelli, served as a nurse in the Air Force. After the War, while the parties were stationed at Eglin AFB, Florida, they were blessed with the birth of the Mondelli twins, Jim and Mike.

Upon his discharge from the Army Air Corps, the parties moved their family to Nashville, where Judge Mondelli attended and graduated from Vanderbilt Law School in 1951. The parties were further blessed with the births of three sons, Leslie L. Mondelli, Jr., Frank Mondelli, and Mark Mondelli.

After law school, Judge Mondelli was employed as a senior claims adjuster for the American Insurance Company, which later became the Fireman's Fund American.

Exhibiting the same courage as had been demonstrated in his earlier life, with two sons at the University of Tennessee, three sons at Father Ryan High School and other parochial schools, Judge Mondelli was driving to work, and as he passed the Vanderbilt Law School on his way to his office, he decided that he wanted to practice the profession of law for which he had been trained. He

bypassed his place of employment and drove directly to the law office of Harry S. Lester in the Stahlman Building (later known as Judge Harry S. Lester, Second Circuit Court for Davidson County, Tennessee). Judge Mondelli stated his desire to practice law and, as was Judge Lester's practice, he was invited immediately to share office space and start immediately practicing law, where he became a member of the firm of Lester, Loser, Hildebrand, Nolan, Lane & Mondelli (the Loser being Joe Loser, Jr., the esteemed Dean of the Nashville School of Law and Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit Court for Davidson County, Tennessee.) Les Mondelli developed a thriving law practice; however, Les used a different yardstick to measure success of most members of the Bar. One Christmas, while reflecting over the past year's legal activities with his partners, he recalled the number of unemployed people that he was able to assist in obtaining jobs, the number of homeless that had obtained homes (through his efforts – although he did not suggest that to be the case), and the families that had been helped in other ways.

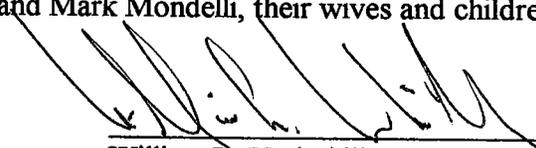
In 1970, Judge Mondelli, along with five of his partners, purchased the building at 214 Third Avenue North, where he practiced with the firm of Lester, Hildebrand, Nolan, Lane, Underhill & Mondelli, until he received the appointment of General Sessions Judge for the Metropolitan and Nashville Davidson County General Sessions Court in 1971, and served thereafter for 19 years as the General Sessions, Division 6, Judge until 1990 when he retired. He was replaced by one of his sons, Judge Michael Mondelli, after winning a highly-contested race for that judgeship.

Upon his entry of active service as the General Sessions Judge, he demonstrated the same qualities that were so indigenous to Judge Mondelli: kindness, consideration, fairness, and of genuine love for his fellow man. Whenever a hard decision had to be made, Les always showed great kindness and compassion to the person that was receiving a personally adverse decision. He showed great kindness to young lawyers who were first coming before him, and treated everyone in the courtroom with respect and dignity. In keeping with his religious beliefs, Judge Mondelli's private life consisted of devotion to his family, including his children, their spouses and his grandchildren, which numbered 16 and four great grandchildren at the time of his death.

In his private life, Judge Mondelli served his church, the Knights of Columbus organization, and had time to be a gentleman farmer on his small farm in Davidson County known as the Mondelli Farm, which served as a refuge and sanctuary for many people. There was always a place where a person could live while they were in an interim situation.

Likewise, he showed the same compassion to his fellow man by tilling up a portion the land and providing fresh vegetables for the boat people escaping from Southeast Asia and coming to this Country. That was Judge Leslie L. Mondelli, a kind, compassionate, sweet, loving man who administered the law fairly and justly, with goodwill for all, a deep love for his friends, lawyers, most of all his family, and his Lord and Savior.

Resolve that the Nashville Bar Association, by this resolution, honor the memory of Judge Mondelli and extend its deep-felt sympathy to his family, consisting of his wife, his son Jim, an attorney, Judge Michael Mondelli, Les Mondelli, Chief Probation Officer for the General Sessions Court, Frank Mondelli, an attorney, and Mark Mondelli, their wives and children.



William L. Underhill