

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE  
ALLEN COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

JOSEPH CHRISTOFF

*WHEREAS, we are here to pay our respects to the memory of our deceased colleague and friend, Joseph Christoff, who died July 29, 2012 at the age of 83; and*

*WHEREAS, Joseph Christoff was the son of Anastas and Anastasia Christoff, who had emigrated from Macedonia. From an early age, he worked with his father in his father's grocery store where he learned family loyalty and a very strong work ethic. Although he spoke only Macedonian when he first entered grammar school, he learned English quickly and eventually earned an undergraduate degree in History and Russian and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from Indiana University, Bloomington.*

*He practiced law in Fort Wayne for 56 years, during 4 of which he was City Court Judge. He had a strong sense of justice, particularly for the little guy. Early in his City Judge career, he noticed a great number of arrests for driving under the influence and he apparently doubted their authenticity. He therefore had a couple of police officers take him to 3 different taverns where he had an alcoholic drink at each one and then went back to the police department and took a breathalyzer test. The breathalyzer was less than .15, which at that time meant you were intoxicated. Joe didn't mention that experience to anyone. He just gave every police officer a tie clasp with the scales of justice on it.*

Joe believed in dispensing justice with practicality and with mercy. One officer told me the story that he and his partner saw an elderly woman driving on Broadway at Jefferson slowly, who deliberately ran a red light. There was no traffic and no one was harmed, but the officer felt compelled to give her a citation. She objected and insisted on a trial date. One of the officers went to the court on the day of the trial and when the case was called, the elderly lady didn't show up. Joe required the officer to wait until the very end of the court session to give the woman time to appear. As the session was about to end, she burst through the big doors of the City Court and without being announced, said in a loud voice: "Judge Christoff I did not run that red light, no matter what those officers tell you." Joe looked down at her and said "Mrs. So and So, if you told me that light was full of jelly beans, I'd believe you. Go on home." The officer who had been there all morning just rolled his eyes.

Joe had a great sense of humor. Once after Joe had suspended a defendant's driver's license, the defendant constantly wrote him letters and threatening postcards asking that Joe reinstate his driver's license. After a while, Joe finally became concerned and went to Walter Helmke, who was the Prosecuting Attorney at the time and showed him all the notes and cards and wanted Walter to do something about it. Walter smiled and said, "Joe, that's just goes with the territory and it is part of what you have to accept. Those guys are all talk; they never do anything." So Joe went back to the office and wrote a letter to the disgruntled defendant and told him that he didn't have any authority to reinstate his license but the man who did have the authority was Walter Helmke and he should contact him. Of course, Walter immediately started getting threatening cards until finally Walter came to

Joe and said you've got to find this man in contempt. To which Joe replied, "Walter, that just goes with the territory."

I should also mention that there were a great number of people unable to distinguish between Joe Christoff, Otto Bonahoom and George Mallers. They were constantly being mistaken for each other and Joe could never understand how that could be since he was obviously so much better looking than the other two.

If there is one thing that distinguished Joe Christoff from other people, it was his giving nature. He learned from his parents always to put family and friends first. He was constantly striving to make life better for those that he loved. As an example, he asked Ginny, his wife, what is the thing that you want more than anything in the world? And she said that she wanted a big, beautiful house to live in and that she wanted to design it herself. So Joe gave her the opportunity to do that and then he hired an architect to come in and look at her plans to make sure that they were architecturally sound.

In illustrating that he always put his family first, Joe would come in after work every day and be home for dinner with the family and then would go back to the office and work late, work Saturday and sometimes Sunday. He never missed a tennis tournament for Joey and he spent much time with his children and grandchildren, always putting them first, ahead of everything else, including his work.

But Joe Christoff didn't only put his immediate family first. He went out of his way to help his brother who was seriously impaired and he devoted time

*and money to take care of immigrants who came from Macedonia in order to help them find a place to live and get situated so that they could acclimate to their new surroundings and to help them start a new life in America.*

*Joe's other outstanding attribute was his friendliness. His cheerful disposition endeared him to everyone. Probably his favorite saying was "Not all of my friends are clients, but all of my clients are my friends."*

*Love has been described as the giving of yourself for the good of others. By that definition, Joe Christoff was a most loving son, husband, father, grandfather, lawyer and friend. Although "the good that men do is often interred with their bones," it shall not be that way for Joe Christoff. He will live in the hearts of all those to whom he gave of himself. He will be sorely missed but, as always, Shakespeare said it best, "Parting is such sweet sorrow till it be 'morrow" when we shall meet Joe Christoff again.*

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Allen County Bar Association gives public expression of sorrow upon this, the occasion of the remembrance of the life of Joseph Christoff.*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution be unanimously adopted by these present upon this occasion; and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution be transmitted by the Allen County Bar Association to the members of the Joseph Christoff family; and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution be spread of Record in the permanent records of the Federal and State courts of Allen County, Indiana, to evidence the respect and admiration of the members of the Bench and Bar for their departed friend and colleague, Joseph Christoff.*

*Dated this 30th day of November, 2012*

THE ALLEN COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

By: *Stephen P. Rademaker*  
Stephen P. Rademaker, President

By: *Otto M. Bonahoom*  
Otto M. Bonahoom, Memorials Committee

By: *Nancy Ellicoff Boyer*  
The Honorable Nancy Ellicoff Boyer  
Judge, Allen Superior Court

