

The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.

July 25, 1933 - June 30, 2019

Frank Michael Kratovil, Sr. was the first child of Frank Michael and Harriet Kratokvil and was born on July 25, 1933 in Detroit, Michigan. His father, Frank Sr., who was the son of immigrants and who later became the Bureau Chief of the Field Operations Division of the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in Washington, D.C., changed the last name of his son and second child Nancy to “Kratovil” in an attempt to anglicize the name. That effort, however, apparently had little impact on Frank Jr.’s fellow elementary school classmates in Marietta, Georgia while Frank, Sr. was stationed there who nonetheless considered Frank, Jr. a “Yankee”, a fact that he later credited for his interest and talent as a boxer. Following the name change, Frank, Jr. became the first Frank Michael Kratovil.

In 1945, Frank’s family moved to Beltsville, Maryland so that his father could assume his new responsibilities with the FCC and Frank eventually became part of the final graduating class of Greenbelt High School in 1951. By his own admission, Frank was not a stellar student and was more interested in friends, football and girls and was quite fortunate his adolescent activities did not prevent him from graduating or land him in juvenile detention. Following graduation from high school, Frank enrolled at the University of Maryland to play football and attend college on the side. Although he impressed the coaches with his tenacity and aggressiveness and immediately practiced as a freshman against some of Maryland’s greatest players including Jack

Scarbath, Ed Modzelewski and Chester Hanulak, his inattentiveness to his studies finally caught up with him and because of his failing grades was drafted into the United States Army and deployed to Korea. As he put it, “one day I was playing football at the University of Maryland and the next day I was freezing my butt off in Inchon Harbor”.

The military, however, proved to be the catalyst for a remarkable change in Frank’s life. Fortunate to have met a friend from Greenbelt who was an investigator in the Military Police, Frank became a criminal investigator sparking a lifelong interest in the law. While in Korea, he also developed a lifelong interest and love for music, beginning with Chet Baker, Gerry Mulligan, Miles Davis and Sarah Vaughan and culminating in a 2500 album collection including all genres of music with artists as varied as Iggy Pop and Ice-T to Pavarotti, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young and Mozart. His love of music would be passed on to his children and grandchildren over the next sixty years.

Following Korea and with a newly found interest in academics and intellectual endeavors, Frank returned to the University of Maryland and despite requests from his former coaches, decided to focus all his time and energy instead on his studies. Although the military had been a dramatic turning point in his life, an equally momentous event would occur shortly after his return, beginning with a blind date with a petite, vivacious and attractive social work student at Western Maryland College from Baltimore, Lynnda Lee Skinner. Although Lynnda reportedly attempted to back out of the date which had been arranged by a close friend and was, in fact, with another suitor shortly before the date, Lynnda later admitted she knew immediately that she was likely to marry the former MP who was already demonstrating a unique interest and knowledge in a broad spectrum of areas, including literature, poetry, music and politics. Their eventual marriage on September 12, 1959 would bring together two fiercely independent people with a shared intellectual and adventurous energy that would spark memorable and exotic travel, passionate advocacy for civil

rights, political activism and three children, Terry Lynn, Connie Lee and Frank Michael, Jr. His devotion and attention to his children and eight grandchildren, Frankie, III, Jackson, Robert Cole, Nate, Sean Thomas, Charlotte, Sonya and Ayden, would continue to the end of his life and would include frequent invites for Sunday breakfast at local establishments on Kent Island and attendance at nearly every athletic and extra-curricular event for his grandchildren. Given his attendance at those events and his vocal support of and encouragement for many other young students in the community, his absence will be not only be noticed, but clearly missed by many.

Following his graduation from the University of Maryland, the University of Maryland School of Law and his passage of the bar exam, Frank entered private practice and over the next 2 ½ decades developed an extensive and successful general practice with offices in Hyattsville, Annapolis and La Plata. During those years, he served in various positions within Prince George's County including as its first lobbyist in Annapolis, Associate County Attorney, Orphans' Court Judge and town attorney for Fairmont Heights. Politically, he also remained very active, serving in the Young Democrats of Maryland, as Prince George's County Chairman for Joe Tydings' campaign for U.S. Senate, Prince George's County Chairman for Bobby Kennedy's campaign for President and as the attorney for the board seeking to change the form of government in Prince George's County, a hard-fought and politically controversial battle that was won, but that had significant political impact on Frank's efforts later to obtain a judgeship. Eventually, after years of being found qualified and nominated for the bench by his fellow lawyers and with the help of several prominent lawyers and politicians, in 1988, Governor Donald Schaefer appointed Frank to the District Court of Maryland. Two years later, Chief Judge Sweeney appointed him as the Administrative Judge for Prince George's County, a position he retained until his retirement in 2002.

In addition to his love of music, Frank loved sports, any and all. For years, he had season tickets to the University of Maryland football and men's and women's basketball games, the Washington Redskins' football games and even the Bowie Baysox games, the Orioles' local minor-league baseball team. He and other family members also consistently attended the Atlantic Coast Conference basketball tournament in North Carolina. In later years, his passion for sports was refocused on his grandchildren and he became a regular fan at their youth, high school and college games and would call daily to inquire about any games he had missed. His love of sports continued literally until his final day when just hours before his death he inquired as to when the United States women's soccer team was playing against England. In his last few years, his passion for sports was balanced with his continuing interest in politics, history and music and included reading four papers a day and several books a week and listening to music from his extensive collection. The intellectual, musical and political spark generated by his military service in Korea continued literally up until his final day.

Although Frank's love of his family, of sports and of music is well known among his friends and colleagues, perhaps his most significant legacy is the example he set for his children, grandchildren and community in terms of his fairness and courage to do the right thing. As noted in a Washington Post article published upon his retirement in 2002, he always appeared to be on the right side of justice even when against his personal and political interest. In a high profile and nationally significant custody case, he challenged a state statute authorizing the removal of children from the care and custody of their African-American mother simply because a second child had been born out of wedlock. He fought for integration and supported busing when unpopular among his white community members and joined and supported numerous civic and political organizations including the ACLU, the NAACP and the National Organization of Women long before it was politically correct to do so. He and his wife Lynnda opposed most members of their own community in

pushing to integrate the local community pool. And when other judges did not want to handle a very controversial and contentious case involving Prince George's County police officers accused of severely beating an unarmed and handcuffed African-American suspect, he retained the case himself and upon conviction sentenced the officers to jail for the first time in the history of Prince George's County. He did these things in the face of overwhelming social, political and community opposition, pressure and intimidation because he simply believed fairness and justice required it. That commitment to fairness and justice is perhaps his most lasting legacy.

Frank is survived by his wife Lynnda Lee Skinner Kratovil; daughter Terri Kratovil Meijer, her husband Peter Meijer and their daughter Sonja Lynnda of Divonne, France; his daughter Connie Lee Kratovil-Lavelle, and her son Sean Thomas and daughter Charlotte Lee of Stevensville, Maryland; his son Frank Michael Kratovil, Jr, his wife Kimberly Erin Fulghum Kratovil, their sons Frank Michael III, Jackson Skye, Robert Cole, Nathaniel Gray and their daughter, Ayden Lee of Stevensville, Maryland.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you please consider a gift to Compass Regional Hospice, 160 Coursevall Drive, Centreville, Maryland 21617 or online at compassregionalhospice.org.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

AUG 4. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

Kratovil Family Home
838 Thompson Creek Road
Stevensville, MD 21666

Military Honors

AUG 4. 3:00 PM (ET)

Kratovil Family Home
838 Thompson Creek Road
Stevensville, MD 21666

Tribute Wall



“ *The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.*

October 26, 2023 at 06:42 PM



“ *The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.*

January 28, 2023 at 12:44 PM



“ *The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.*

January 28, 2023 at 08:03 AM



“ *On behalf of my mother, Marie Neher Gussio, she shared that she is very saddened by his passing and sends her condolences to the family. She stated that Frank was very devoted to his wife, children, and grandchildren, and a stand up person in every way despite the numerous spit balls he was responsible for in her hair of and her classmates'. He truly understood the meaning of prioritization of what is important in life. Deepest condolences to family.*

sherryl gussio amoyal - January 30, 2020 at 10:18 AM



“ *Very sorry for you loss! He enjoyed coming to all the games.*

The Haney family



Kim Haney - August 04, 2019 at 01:07 PM

PE

“ *My condolences to the Kratovil family. I am very sorry to hear about your loss.*

Philip Epstein

Philip Epstein - August 03, 2019 at 01:37 PM

SP

“ *I considered Frank most importantly a friend and also a colleague both at the Bar and the Bench in that order . I along with our mutual close friend Joe Casula was considered by him to be at least a "suspect " as to who started the nickname of " The Hammer" . I was his Administrative Judge in the District Court. He was very simply a delight, i.e. fun to work and play with . He took his work very seriously and himself less so. To know him was to like him and to very much appreciate his sense of humor which made his " Hammer-Like Image among some members of the Bar a subject of bemusement and joking by his friends . His devotion to his family and to his friends was evident to all. We'll see you on August 4 .*
Steve Platt

Steven I. Platt - July 25, 2019 at 11:41 PM

RJ

“ Frank was known as “The Hammer” while a judge due to his no nonsense demeanor and strict enforcement of the law, but he had a heart of gold. He was an absolute joy to try a case in front of if the lawyer was on his game. He always listened. He was a great Terp fan, and seemed to make every softball, basketball, lacrosse game any of his kids or grandkids ever played, and always had a suggestion to the player after the game. He would have been an amazing coach at any level of any sport. Frank learned to scuba dive late in life, and absolutely loved it. On a bar convention trip to Turks & Caicos, he taught legal seminars in the morning and was on the dive boat in the afternoon with a huge smile. I loved swapping dive stories with him. I’m not sure I ever met anyone who took more joy in being a grandfather. He will be greatly missed, and stories of “The Hammer” will be lovingly told by lawyers for years to come. Rick Jaklitsch

Rick Jaklitsch - July 24, 2019 at 11:40 AM



“ Thurman Rhodes lit a candle in memory of The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.



Thurman Rhodes - July 24, 2019 at 11:08 AM

KA

“ To the Kratovil Family:

I will always remember Judge Kratovil taking the time to speak with me after I, as a new Assistant State's Attorney, tried seven cases before him in Hyattsville. I peppered him with questions, asking him what I did right, what I did wrong and how I could improve. He answered all of my questions and gave constructive direction where needed. I kept him well past the close of business but he did not complain or rush me. He loved the practice of law and assisting new lawyers, like myself at that time, to be the best that they could be. I will always remember him for his guidance.

May the peace of God's healing powers support you during this difficult time.

*Krystal Alves
Circuit Court Prince George's County*

Krystal Alves - July 24, 2019 at 09:00 AM

JE

“ *A few of us were just having dinner and discussing our most memorable experiences during our years of practice. Judge Kratovil's starting "on-time", and dismissing State cases at the drop of a hat if no ASA was present was at the top of the list. I appreciated his candor and "no nonsense" approach. He is missed. My sympathies to the Kratovil family.*

Johnine N. Clark, Esquire - July 24, 2019 at 12:55 AM

GE

*It was always a privilege to appear before him. May he rest in peace.
George M. Blumenthal, Esq.*

George M. Blumenthal, Esq - July 24, 2019 at 09:58 AM

ME

“ I always enjoyed practicing law before Judge Kratovil. He was punctual, consistent and fair. Off the bench he was as nice as can be. My best to his family.

Mike Epstein

Michael Epstein - July 10, 2019 at 03:08 PM

RH

“ I had the pleasure of working in the Administrative Offices in Upper Marlboro from 1990 until 2002 where Judge Kratovil had chambers as Administrative judge. I learned so much from him and about him during those years. I respected him immensely and enjoyed his sense of humor.

I loved that he was ALWAYS himself and loved cranking up his stereo to play Muddy Waters albums. His love of family was obvious and endearing.

I sparred with him on occasion, and he always respected facts and my standing firm.

I have the fondest memories of him and offer prayers and my deepest sympathies to Judge Kratovil's family. ❤️

Rebecca Hinkle - July 10, 2019 at 09:16 AM

LH

“ Dear Kratovil Family, I am so sorry for your loss. He taught me so much at the District Court and always made me laugh. He was such a great man and I will always remember him fondly. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Lori Hester

Lori Hester - July 10, 2019 at 08:39 AM

CC

“ Carol Callaway lit a candle in memory of The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.



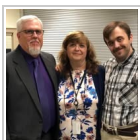
Carol Callaway - July 09, 2019 at 09:04 PM

BW

“ Barbara Baer Waxman lit a candle in memory of The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.



Barbara Baer Waxman - July 09, 2019 at 10:48 AM



“ Ginger Lockhart lit a candle in memory of The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.



Ginger Lockhart - July 08, 2019 at 10:36 PM

LR

“ Lisa Ritter lit a candle in memory of The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.



Lisa Ritter - July 08, 2019 at 04:19 PM

TF

“ Tracy And Stacey Schulz And Family sent a virtual gift in memory of The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.



Tracy and Stacey Schulz and Family - July 08, 2019 at 04:02 PM

JW

“ Frank was always so proud of his family. His love of family who always put family first, his and ours, above all else, helped all of his coworkers as our Administrative Judge.

Joel Worshtil - July 05, 2019 at 09:40 PM



“ Jim Ewing lit a candle in memory of The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.



Jim Ewing - July 04, 2019 at 03:28 PM

PR

“ Dear Frank, Kim, and Family, So sorry for your loss. Thoughts and prayers for all of you. Pat

Patricia Radcliffe - July 04, 2019 at 10:58 AM

JB

“ Frank & Kim I am very sorry to hear about your Dad's passing. Sending prayers and hugs.



Joyce Benton - July 04, 2019 at 08:46 AM

DP

“ I'm sorry for your loss Frank. God bless you and your family at this difficult time.



Donna Powell - July 04, 2019 at 07:50 AM

SN

“ Sue Nickerson lit a candle in memory of The Hon. Frank M. Kratovil Sr.



Sue Nickerson - July 04, 2019 at 07:17 AM

PF

“ My thoughts and prayers are with the Kratovil family at this sad time.



Phil Foster - July 04, 2019 at 02:25 AM

BM

“ *I always enjoyed seeing you at our grandsons' lacrosse games.*

Bill McGinnes - July 03, 2019 at 08:00 PM