

APPENDIX

JUSTICE JOSEPH F. DANNEHY

The Honorable Joseph F. Dannehy, a longtime Willimantic resident who had a lengthy and distinguished career in the Connecticut judiciary, passed away on December 16, 2003, at the age of eighty-six. Justice Dannehy was born in Willimantic on May 28, 1917, and attended St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield. He received his B.A. from Boston College in 1940, and earned his L.L.B. from Cornell University Law School in 1943. Upon graduation, he was admitted to the Connecticut bar that same year. From 1943 to 1946, Justice Dannehy served in the United States Army during World War II with the Counter Intelligence Corps of the 17th Airborne Division in Germany.

Justice Dannehy was a member of the Windham County Bar Association and began his law career as an assistant prosecuting attorney in the Willimantic Police Court from 1946 to 1959. He also served as town counsel for Windham from 1946 to 1948, and as corporation counsel for Willimantic from 1947 to 1959.

During his forty-two years on the bench, Justice Dannehy had the unique distinction of being the only judge to have served on every court in the Connecticut judicial system. In 1961, he was nominated to the Circuit Court where he served until 1965, when he was appointed to the Court of Common Pleas. Justice Dannehy served as the chief judge of that court from 1967 to 1968. In 1968, he was appointed a judge of the Superior Court where he served for a period of fifteen years. Thereafter, in 1983, Justice Dannehy was appointed as one of the original five judges of the newly created Appellate Court, and he became its first chief presiding judge. After leading that court for more than one year, he was appointed an associate justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court in 1984. Justice Dannehy retired from the Supreme Court in 1987 upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of seventy. Thereafter, he continued his service to the judiciary by serving as a judge trial referee for sixteen years until his death in 2003.

During his tenure as a Supreme Court justice and an Appellate Court judge, Justice Dannehy resided on the judicial panel of 535 cases. He authored ninety majority opinions, seventy-six while serving as a member of the Supreme Court. At a ceremony marking his retirement from

the Connecticut Supreme Court, Chief Justice Ellen A. Peters acknowledged that Justice Dannehy “has been a valued friend and colleague whose contribution to the work of this court has been impressive.” Additionally, in recognizing Justice Dannehy’s significant contributions to the administrative agenda of the judicial department, Justice Peters commented: “With unflagging energy and profound understanding of the judicial process, he has steadfastly endeavored to strengthen judicial administration in this state.”

During his so-called retirement years, Justice Dannehy worked relentlessly as a judge trial referee mediating or pretrying cases where he devoted many hours to the settlement of cases. As a result, he settled thousands of cases in his second career as a judge trial referee and many deserving litigants did not have to wait years to recover their losses.

Throughout his distinguished legal and judicial career, Justice Dannehy also served on the judicial council, the sentence review division of the Superior Court, the commission on adult probation, the state bar examining committee and the executive committee of the Superior Court. He also served as administrative judge of the Windham judicial district.

In addition to his judicial duties, Justice Dannehy was very active in politics and local community affairs. He served as assistant clerk of the state Senate, chairman of the Windham Democratic Town Committee and president of the Windham County Democratic Association. Additionally, Justice Dannehy served as governor of the Willimantic Country Club, director of the Willimantic YMCA, trustee of the Windham Community Memorial Hospital, president of the Windham Visiting Nurses Association, president of the Greater Willimantic Community Chest, first vice president of the Willimantic Chamber of Commerce and director of the Chronicle Printing Company and the Willimantic Savings Institute.

Justice Dannehy was predeceased by his wife of many years, Margaret Riordan Dannehy, who died in 1997, and was survived by their four children, Nora R. Dannehy, Mary Ellen Dannehy, Michael R. Dannehy and Patrick T. Dannehy, as well as two grandchildren.

On September 21, 2005, a memorial dedication for Justice Dannehy was held at the Willimantic Superior Court where

he was honored and recognized for his contributions to the law, the art of lawyering and the community. He was remembered by friends and colleagues as a judge who was well liked and respected, and who ran his courthouse in a firm but fair manner. He was also remembered as a very private person who helped many people and many causes but never wanted the spotlight. In receiving the ultimate compliment for a judge, Justice Dannehy was praised as a man of integrity and accomplishment who made his colleagues better lawyers.
