



William R. Davis

February 9, 2021

Attorney William R. Davis, 90, beloved father of Russell J. Davis and daughter-in-law Susan of Bloomfield, passed away peacefully at his home on Tuesday, February 9, 2021, after an extended illness.

Bill was born in Waterbury Connecticut, the son of the late May A. Davis and Russell George Davis of West Hartford.

He was predeceased by wife, Doris O. Davis and his two daughters, Carolyn Davis and Alyce Davis Knapp, and predeceased by wife, Joanne Gleason.

Beside his son and daughter-in-law, he is survived by his grandchildren, William R. Davis, Brindis M. Davis, Russell (Hondo) A. Davis, Myles O. Davis, Carrie Luken, Aine Knapp, Liam Knapp, Sean Knapp and his treasured great grandchildren, Holden Davis and Brayden Brewer. He also leaves behind stepchildren, Bridget, Meg, Colleen, and Devin Gleason along with several nieces, nephews, cousins, many life-long friends including his second family at RisCassi and Davis, P.C.

Bill was a graduate of Weaver High School and a proud graduate of Providence College. He received his law degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 1955. He served proudly in the United States Army. An avid athlete, Bill ran and walked numerous marathons and enjoyed a

great love for baseball and football. He particularly enjoyed telling stories and remembering the great history of Willie Mays and Mel Ott. Bill shared his success by being a philanthropist and contributor to many charitable and educational organizations, including his beloved Providence College where he served on the Board of Trustees. The University of Connecticut School of Law, where he served on the Adjunct Faculty for over 20 years, honored him by naming its Moot Courtroom “The William R. Davis Courtroom.”

Bill was first introduced, by his father, to Attorney Leon RisCassi. Their firm, RisCassi & Davis, P.C., was born when Bill Davis joined Leon in the practice of law in 1955. Throughout his long and storied career, Bill consistently served as a teacher and inspiration to younger lawyers, not only by his courtroom skills but by his professionalism, collegiality, and civility. He taught generations of young lawyers what it meant to be a trial lawyer.

Bill was the recipient of the Connecticut Bar Association’s Edward F. Hennessey Professionalism Award recognizing integrity, character, professionalism, and competency in the practice of law. He received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Connecticut Alumni Association. He was a diplomate of the American Board of Trial Advocates; a fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers; and a fellow of the International Society of Barristers. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association. He held all leadership offices in local state and regional bar associations and was continually recognized for his leadership and commitment to the profession.

Bill was a true gentle man, a man of great faith, a mentor to many, and a friend to all.

Friends and family may gather and social distance at the Molloy Funeral Home, 906 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford on Monday, February 15,

2021, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. for a walk through wake. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Tuesday, February 16, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. at The Church of St. Timothy, 1116 North Main Street, West Hartford. Please note Covid 19 restrictions on masks and capacity will be in place. A private burial service will follow. This service will be live streamed and available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/BOWFWGLEoOM>.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in William's memory can be made to the May A. Davis Endowed Scholarship Fund, University of Saint Joseph, 1678 Asylum Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06117 (usj.edu/give) and Saint Timothy's Middle School, 225 King Philip Drive, West Hartford, CT 06117 (www.stmswh.org) Online remembrances may be made at www.molloyfuneralhome.com.

A celebration in Bill's memory will follow later in year when times and COVID allow.

Previous Events

Calling Hours

FEB **15**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Molloy Funeral Home
906 Farmington Ave
West Hartford, CT 06119
(860) 232-1322

Mass of Christian Burial

FEB **16**. 10:00 AM (ET)

Church of St. Timothy
1116 North Main St
West Hartford, CT 06117
(860) 233-5131

Tribute Wall



“ *Molloy Funeral Home created a Funeral Mass Stream in memory of William R. Davis*



Molloy Funeral Home - February 12, 2021 at 01:56 PM

PK

“ *While I never had the pleasure of meeting Bill in person, he was generous enough to write a letter of recommendation on my behalf to Providence College. It was the nudge the admissions board needed to admit me, and it changed my life for the better. I am forever grateful to him. My deepest condolences to his family.*

Patrick Keefe - February 24, 2021 at 02:50 PM

JM

“ Bill was the gold standard among trial lawyers in Hartford. He always did everything exceedingly well, and he always did everything right. Truly effective for his clients, ethically impeccable, down to earth and caring, Bill was a beacon of the bar. After having tried a case against him in the 80's, I was delighted to get to know Bill better when I moved into his parish in West Hartford in 1997. A few years back, I was sharing lunch with Bill at the West Hartford Mens' Retreat at Holy Family Monastery. I had a chance to congratulate him on not just creating the best, most ethical plaintiffs' firm in the state, but on maintaining its high standard of quality over time. It was, and remains an unbelievable achievement and will stand as his legal legacy to our community. My thoughts and prayers are with Bill's family and colleagues. We have lost a prince of a man. Wishing you peace, John D. Moore

john moore - February 14, 2021 at 08:41 PM

BK

“ Bill Davis always made me proud I was a lawyer. As a young lawyer short calendar was the opportunity to watch the giants strut their stuff. No one was better than Bill. But above all, he was always a consummate gentleman. My prayers are with his family.
Bob Killian

Bob Killian - February 13, 2021 at 03:44 PM

AG

“ A true master in his profession and an admirable person to whom I will forever be indebted. My condolences to the family of this outstanding individual.

Al Garofolo

Al Garofolo - February 13, 2021 at 01:08 PM

PT

“ My deepest condolences and sincere prayers for you all, on the loss of such a magnificent, generous and gifted man. It has been a genuine honor to be at your home and provide the Holy Eucharist, prayers, stories, and yes, laughter for these past few months. Bill became my spiritual "dad," always asking questions about how everyone else was doing, providing support and praise, and showing me an incredible model of a great man, with even greater faith.

I will miss our times together and please know that I am a better man, having know your dad. And yes, what I lacked to say that last night, I shall proclaim now, "I love you Bill Davis."

Paul F Travers - February 13, 2021 at 11:11 AM

“ I remember Bill Davis. I took a trial practice course with him in law school. He was a quiet man, always prepared and quite unassuming. No, he did not look like he was from Central Casting, nor was there anything remarkable about his appearance. For a legal giant, he was about as basic as one could get. The real lesson in watching him was that he seemed to embody a certain brand of dignity that fit well within the Connecticut legal establishment. The word that comes to mind for Mr. Davis is avuncular. He is like that old uncle who used to be so much fun to see because whenever he showed up, I knew I was getting a shiny new nickel.

I remember the part of the trial practice class when we practiced giving closing arguments. In my mock argument, I represented a plaintiff who had gotten shot accidentally by a relative. Once I started my argument, I used a greeting from comedian Joan Rivers, "can we talk?" which immediately drew laughter from the rest of the class. From then on, it was almost like a comedy skit. I did not realize it then but I had just lost the jury. Through it all, Mr. Davis maintained a smile although he did not comment.

When the class ended and I received my grade, I was so disappointed when he gave me a C . I did not understand the lesson he was trying to send me.

Years later, I had a civil trial in the Hartford courthouse where Mr. Davis made his name. I represented a company accused of discriminating against a Black female employee. As the only other Black person in the case, I felt safe in being rather aggressive against the plaintiff in front of the jury. I thought I'd done well in portraying the defendant as a malingerer.

When the verdict was read, we had lost and I could not understand why. That's when I thought about Mr. Davis and the trial practice class. That's when I began to more fully understand that juries have a way of reading lawyers in a way that is not taught in law school. Juries assess the lawyers just as much as they assess the litigants.

Perhaps the best lesson ever Bill Davis taught did not come from his mouth but from his presence.

Joe Elder - February 13, 2021 at 10:38 AM

BW

“ *A finer gentleman I never met. My conversations with him in our later years (when we met) at Effies restaurant will remain with me forever. He is in my prayers. It is my hope Bill's family will receive strength from his life as they grieve his passing. Bruce Wilson-Farmington*

Bruce Wilson - February 13, 2021 at 10:17 AM

“ *Aside from being a great lawyer, brilliant intellect and probably a great person Bill was something even more, he was a good man. He was a humble man. He was a very sincere man. And he was a caring man. If you first saw Bill you were not impressed. A tall gangly man with a toothy smile and hair that probably would drive a hairdresser crazy, he did not look the part of the great trial lawyer as portrayed by Gregory Peck in To Kill a Mockingbird.*

I first heard of Bill in 1969. I had graduated law school and was clerking in the Hartford Superior Court. You heard the name Bill Davis spoken in awe. So as you are surrounded by the giants of the bar, Jack Scully, Henry Cooney, Bill Moeller, and Andy O'Keefe you waited to get a glimpse of this legendary lawyer. Then you saw a tall gangly man who suit fit him but yet did not fit him. He did not look like any lawyer you had seen in the movies or on the TV. But as he walked into the courtroom, lawyers parted away to let him pass. He did not walk with an air of arrogance but rather one of humility. And when he smiled he lit up the room. Lawyers gathered about him to listen. More importantly Bill listened to them.

So there I was a few months out of law school, waiting to hear the results of my bar exam. Bill needed something and he approached me. He treated me as an equal. Here is a giant of a man who came to me as a lowly clerk yet treated me as an equal. And that was Bill. Bill was a man of the people.

And as you got to know him you realized he was a good man. Everybody was his equal. And he was simple in the sense that he cut to the chase, he was never one for pomp and circumstance. He was Bill Davis not William Davis. And to all women who work for him he was Mr. Davis.

He tried his cases like he led his life. A very simple credo. Truth will always prevail. Watching Bill try a case was not unlike watching an artist, such as a painter painting a portrait, a sculptor sculpting a statue or songwriter writing a song. Bill stood before the jury with all

the facts of this case on his pallet. He dipped his brush into those facts and only painted the picture of what truly happened. It was not a flamboyant picture but a clear, concise picture of the harm suffered by his client. Not the plaintiff, but the person in his care, his client. His cases were very simple. As a consequence defense attorneys had little or nothing to work with. More importantly Bill was never part of the case but he presented the facts in such a way that the facts were the case. In a sense Bill was a movie projector showing to his audience, the jury, what truly happened. If you really want to know or see this in action listen to the lyrics of any great song. No more than 10 words in each line, and the theme being repeated over and over again. Bill was a songwriter for the injured.

In eighteen months as a clerk in the Superior Court I got to see Bill try many cases. I also got to know him, not well, but to be on a first name basis with him. I always felt honored when he said hello. And just as easily as he could address a jury he could also speak to a judge. He bonded with the jury because he spoke like them and to them. But when he argued the law to the judge you heard a fantastic intellect.

As one of my friends said "he was a fine man." He may have been all of the superlatives that you can think about any person but deep down Bill was a simple good man. Simple in the sense that he saw the good in everybody, simple in the sense that he extended his hand in friendship to everybody and simple in the sense that there were no frills. There are many great men but very few good men. Bill will always be in the hearts of all a very good man.

Ken Laska - February 12, 2021 at 09:31 PM

RM

“ When I was at UConn Law School, Bill Davis was one name that always came up when the subject was great CT trial lawyers. One afternoon after graduation, I got to see Bill in action trying a case. And I came away saying to myself, "Really? That's the man? That's the great trial lawyer?" I was underwhelmed.

You see, I was just a dumb young wanna-be trial lawyer and thought trial lawyers had to be flashy and slick like the ones I had seen on TV and in the movies. I just didn't understand what made great trial lawyers great. I had a lot to learn. So I went to seminars taught by Bill and other leaders of the Bar, including many from Bill's law firm. I watched Bill at trial again and other well-known trial lawyers. I tried some cases myself and slowly, eventually, I began to understand.

What made Bill Davis a great trial lawyer wasn't flash, wasn't slick. It was just the opposite. What made Bill Davis great was he was in-the-moment-real. It goes without saying he was always prepared with outlines and knew the law and his facts cold. But above all else, Bill was real and cared about his clients. To jurors and judges, Bill was just a guy telling the truth as he saw it -- as he believed it. Bill had no airs about him and was just a humble guy trying to help a hurt client get justice. And if you were a juror or a Judge, you knew you could trust him. That's what made Bill Davis a great trial lawyer.

Thank you Bill for all the knowledge you shared over the years with trial lawyers, young and old. Thank you for leading by example.

May you rest in peace.

Condolences to Bill's family and the many good people at RisCassi & Davis.

Atty. Ron Murphy

Ron Murphy - February 12, 2021 at 06:03 PM

PD

Because less is more. Bill Davis was gracious with his time, kind with his words, and always a class act. Rest in Peace.

Peter C. DiTomasso

Peter C. DiTomasso - February 13, 2021 at 09:30 PM

DR

My condolences go out to Bill's family. Bill was a trustee of St Timothy's Church and served on The Finance Committee. I had the privilege of serving on that committee with Bill for over 20 years. Anytime we came to a moment of indecision we looked to Bill for his sage advice and counsel. He was a giant among us. He will be missed by all.

Dennis Rusconi

Dennis Rusconi - February 15, 2021 at 02:33 PM

MR

I was so sorry to hear that "Uncle Bill" had passed away. He was a lovely man who was such a great friend to our family and particularly my dad. I was just getting ready to send him a card with a picture of my father and him that I recently uncovered. He was a great friend, a great "uncle" and a great lawyer and it was a privilege to have known him.

Mary Reid and Raymond Rundelli

Mary Reid - February 16, 2021 at 11:12 AM

LW

Bill was a great family friend for many years. I always took his specialness for granted. If you were dining with Bill you just had a certain expectation of how he was going to treat you because that standard was always consistent. Kind, honest, a true friend and generous with his time.

I didn't realize until after he died what a great gift he was.

He will be missed.

Lorrie Wexler - February 23, 2021 at 01:06 PM