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A Tribute to Judge Frank X. Altimari

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TRIBUTE

A TRIBUTE TO JUDGE FRANK X. ALTIMARI

*Dean Howard A. Glickstein**

Robert Traver, in his book *Anatomy of a Murder*,¹ wrote that judges could be divided into four classes:

judges with neither head nor heart—they are to be
avoided at all costs;
judges with head but no heart—they are almost as bad;
then judges with heart but no head—risky but better than
the first two;
and finally those rare judges who possess both head and
heart.

While I do not believe that this fourth category is as rare as Traver suggests, I think that there is no question that Frank Altimari fits the description of a judge with head and heart.

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¹ ROBERT TRAVER, *ANATOMY OF A MURDER* (1958).

Throughout his professional career, as a lawyer and a judge, Frank Altimari's abilities were universally admired. A few years ago, when the Nassau Bar Association honored Judge Altimari with its annual award, the turnout to pay tribute to him was one of the largest ever.

Judge Altimari's love and devotion for his family and his church permeated all of his activities. He was a loyal and devoted friend. When one of his friends was convicted of a crime and sent to jail, Frank Altimari did not turn his back. He offered support to his friend and family and visited his friend in prison. He was unconcerned that this could bring him bad publicity.

Judge Altimari was deeply involved in the growth of Touro Law School. I frequently turned to him for advice on issues facing the Law School and his counsel invariably was wise. He helped create our Distinguished Jurist in Residence Program and was the first judge to play this role.

Judge Altimari also was a member of our adjunct faculty and taught Trial Practice. All of our teachers, full-time and adjuncts, are evaluated by the students in their classes.

Students who evaluated Judge Altimari were perceptive and incisive. Let me tell you what some of them said. One wrote "Judge Altimari is a superb professor and an even nicer human being. His honesty and respect for his students and Touro Law provided a wonderful environment in which to learn and grow."

Another wrote, "Judge Altimari is a brilliant man. I respect him as a judge, a professor and a person."

One student commented: "There is not a better choice for a professor. Judge Altimari is the BEST!!!!"

Yet another student wrote: "This class has been my very best law school experience. Obviously drawing upon his wealth of experience the judge freely imparts his knowledge in a most impressive and dynamic manner. This has been a most rewarding experience for me."

And then there was a student comment that I bet Judge Altimari did not show to his wife, Angela. This student wrote "Judge Altimari is a pleasure and he is so cute you want to take him home!!!"

I told Judge Altimari that if he were ever interested in joining our full-time faculty I was doubtful that he would receive an affirmative faculty vote. If the faculty members read his student evaluations, they would feel too threatened to embrace him as one of their own.

Learned Hand once said that what a judge does is much like what a poet does or what a sculptor does. Perhaps Judge Altimari's innate skill as a sculptor accounts for his great success as a judge.

A few years ago, Judge Altimari agreed to do a piece of sculpture for the Law School. Our Jewish Law Students Association wanted to create a memorial to the Holocaust. I asked Judge Altimari if he would undertake this assignment and he did so with enthusiasm.

He studied several books about the Holocaust to find inspiration for his sculpture. What caught Judge Altimari's imagination was a picture of a young boy in the Warsaw Ghetto, with a Star of David on his chest and his arms upraised as he was being rounded up. Judge Altimari called the wonderful piece of sculpture that we have on display in the Law School "Zachor," meaning "remember."

And remember is what all of us who knew Frank Altimari will never cease to do. From his family, to his professional colleagues, to the students who sat in his classes, Frank Altimari had an impact that will never be forgotten.

The words of Juliet about her beloved Romeo are equally fitting for Frank Altimari:

"When he shall die," Juliet said,
"Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun."

