

Judge Julian Abele Cook, Jr.

1930-2017



Julian Abele Cook, Jr., former Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan (1989-1996), died May 16, 2017 at his home in Silver Spring, Maryland. He was born on June 22, 1930 to Julian Abele Cook, Sr. and Ruth McNeill Cook in Washington D.C., where he attended public schools, graduating from Dunbar High School in 1948. Judge Cook earned a Bachelor of Arts from the Pennsylvania State University in 1952 and served in the U.S. Army (Signal Corps) from 1952 to 1954. Upon his return, he entered Georgetown University School of Law and earned a Juris Doctor in 1957. He subsequently received a Master of Laws from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1988.

Judge Cook was a proud descendant of a prominent civic-minded family in the District of Columbia. His great great grandfather was John Francis Cook, a freed slave who along with other leaders founded the Columbian Harmony Cemetery, the 15th Street Presbyterian Church, and a school for freed slaves. John F. Cook II, his great grandfather, became Recorder of Deeds in Washington D.C. His great uncle, George F. T. Cook, became the first superintendent of colored D.C. public schools. He was also the grandnephew of Julian F. Abele of Philadelphia, who designed Duke University, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Widener Library at Harvard, and other classic buildings.

In his professional life, Judge Cook had a storied legal career that spanned almost 60 years. After graduating from Georgetown, Judge Cook served as a law clerk to the Hon. Arthur E. Moore, and had a successful law career in private practice and Michigan state government as a Special Assistant Attorney General.

He served as Chairman of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission (1968-1971) and later became an adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law (1971-1978).

Over the span of his professional career, Judge Cook was the recipient of many civic honors and awards including the John Carroll and the Paul R. Dean Alumni Awards (Georgetown University Law Center) and the Pennsylvania State University Distinguished Alumni Award. He also received honorary degrees from Wayne State University Law School, Michigan State University College of Law, and Georgetown University. He received a champion of justice award from the Michigan State Bar

Association and was voted one of the "most respected judges in Michigan" by subscribers of Michigan Lawyers Weekly.

President Jimmy Carter appointed Judge Cook to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan in 1978 and, from 1989-1996, Judge Cook served as the Chief Judge of the Court. Judge Cook presided over several high-profile trials during his time on the bench, including the federal criminal trial of John DeLorean and litigation arising out of the Northwest Airlines flight 255 air crash disaster in Detroit.

Through almost forty years of judicial service, Judge Cook also developed an extended family consisting of his law clerks, whom he mentored and guided through the years. Many of his law clerks gathered at the Court for his retirement ceremony in 2014, having had the good fortune to share their lives with Judge Cook and his family even after leaving his chambers.

For those who had the privilege of knowing Judge Cook, there was never any doubt that his family was his first love. Judge Cook was married to his beloved wife, Carol Dibble Cook, for almost sixty years, and their deep and abiding love and affection for each other was always apparent. Whether he was on the bench in Michigan or in South Carolina (where he maintained a visiting chambers), or teaching trial practice at Harvard University or the University of Virginia, he and Mrs. Cook were inseparable.

Judge Cook also spoke with pride and admiration for his children: Peter, who was one of the lead architects for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture; Susan, a museum exhibition designer; and Jay, a law professor at the University of Georgia. His grandson, Christopher, is a senior at Duke University. His daughter-in-law, Kamil, is an Associate General Counsel at the Nature Conservancy; and daughter-in-law Kara, is a math teacher at a private school in Washington D.C.

Those who had occasion to appear in Judge Cook's courtroom – be they litigants, jurors, or court staff – uniformly spoke of his dedication to justice, his gentle spirit, and his intense sense of fairness. After every jury trial, Judge Cook would personally invite the jurors into his chambers to hear their views and impressions, and took time to explain to them the significance of the service they had rendered. Such were the quiet acts of a jurist who was as committed to the interests of justice as to the notion of kindness to all.

Judge Cook is survived by his wife, Carol, his children and grandson.

In honor of Judge Cook, the family is working with Georgetown University Law Center to establish the "Julian Abele Cook, Jr. Endowed Opportunity Scholarship Fund". His family kindly requests that, in lieu of flowers, consideration be given to donating to the

fund which will be awarded to students who demonstrate financial need and will support students whose background or experience will allow them to contribute to the diversity, enrichment, and advancement of the Law Center and its community.

To contribute, please contact Georgetown University at (202) 662-9500.