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Attorney Lile's legacy of care to be honored at memorial event Friday

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A dedicated and compassionate attorney who enjoyed a lifelong love of learning and served the community in a professional capacity for more than five decades is being remembered upon his passing with a special memorial event set for this week at the Logan County Courthouse.

Family, friends, colleagues and community members are invited to pay tribute to Levi W. Lile at the memorial event hosted by the Logan County Bar Association, which begins at 1 p.m. Friday, Sept. 13, at the Logan County Common Pleas Courtroom. He passed away at the age of 88 on July 5 at his Bellefontaine residence.

Levi was born Oct. 30, 1935, in Logan County on his family's farm to his parents Frank V. and Abbie R. (Hayes) Lile. In 1958, he married the former Nancy Nicholl, who survives. He is also survived by his children, Laird A. Lile of Naples, Fla., Laura (James Tafel) Lile of Franklin, Tenn., and Linn (Richard Silliman) Lile Harson, Yellow Springs; and his grandchildren and nieces and nephews, including his "local children," his nephew Mick Lile and his wife Roni.

Levi's educational jour-



Attorney Levi W. Lile is pictured with his wife at his swearing in date on Nov. 4, 1972, in Columbus. Also pictured are his wife, Nancy M. Lile, and his parents Abby and Frank Lile, and in the front row, Nancy and Levi's children, Laura, Linn and Laird. (LILE FAMILY PHOTO)

ney began at Iron City Elementary School in Bellefontaine, his family noted in his obituary, followed by his graduation from Bellefontaine High School in 1954.

The longtime attorney and former Bellefontaine City Prosecutor then attended The Ohio State University College of Agriculture, where he graduated in 1959. He shared his passion for science by teaching junior high school students at McClain School in Greenfield, Ohio, serving as a teacher alongside his wife Nancy, before deciding to step into a career in the legal field.

While also helping to raise their family of three

young children, Levi started law school at night at Capital Law School in Columbus, and later earned his law degree from Ohio Northern Law School in 1972.

His son, Laird, recalls his father studying late at night while beginning Capital Law School, and also being helpful to his dad by retrieving the law books that he needed. Laird was between the ages of 9 to 11 years old while his father was working his way through law school and this left quite an impression on him.

"Watching my dad's hard work to become a lawyer absolutely impacted my future," said Laird, who

also attended Ohio Northern University's College of Law, graduating in 1984. Laird has spent his career in the field and runs Laird A. Lile Attorney and Counsellor at Law, PLLC, in Naples.

"My dad always seemed to have a very varied and diverse practice, from estate planning to divorces and bankruptcies. One thing that also stood out is that he always took care to get to know his clients."

For 52 years, Levi practiced law in Bellefontaine, and early in his career, he served as the city prosecutor.

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Legacy

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His colleague and friend Howard Traul II, who served as the law director for the City of Bellefontaine for 35 years, also noted the personalized care that Levi extended to his clients.

“He not only tried to take care of their legal needs, but also wanted to get to know them and help them through the personal issues they were facing, whether they were dealing with a divorce, bankruptcy etc. He wanted to help them fix their underlying issues and problems so that they could get to a better place in life.”

Traul said he often faced off against Lile on the other side of the aisle, including on farm foreclosures that were on the docket in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

“We had some knock-down, drag-out situations in court, but at the end of the day outside of the courtroom, we were still always ended up as friends.”

From his friendship with Lile, Traul said he gained three major take-aways — his strong work ethic, willingness to help anyone, and the importance he placed on his family and civic responsibility.

Fellow ONU College of Law graduate Doug Chamberlain, a former Logan County Common Pleas Court judge who also served as a Logan County prosecutor, said he knew Lile to be energetic and resourceful, noting Levi’s early use of computers and providing mentorship to new lawyers in the area.

Chamberlain said Lile also utilized his background in agriculture to help his clients navigate the financial crisis that farmers faced early in his career.

“He worked with farmers to reclassify their debts and to help save their family farms. It was important work that greatly impacted people’s lives.”

Current Logan County Family Court Judge Kim Kellogg-Martin said she first met Lile in 1984. More recently, she said she will never forget his work in the Logan County Family Court arena, where he jumped back into work in his late 70s, representing parents in Logan County Children’s Services actions.

“He often fought harder for the kids than their parents. Levi would encourage his clients to stop using drugs so they could get their kids back,” she said.

“He embraced the power of the human spirit. Levi was brilliant, but he never talked at or above people. He knew the power of creating and maintaining relationships.”

Judge Kellogg-Martin also noted his strong commitment and love of his family.

“Levi leaves behind three incredibly talented children, along with his loving wife, Nancy. He would visit me to share about his children’s contributions to our world. He was super proud of them.”

Lile’s colleagues and friends noted his commitment to his community was further demonstrated through his 70 years as a Mason, 52 years as a member of the Ohio State Bar Association, and his loyalty to the Logan County Bar Association.

His life was further enriched by his love for his grandchildren, his passion for remodeling houses, and his enthusiasm for traveling, especially to the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario, his family said in his obituary.