

**IN MEMORIAM**



**DAVID ZENOFF**

# IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

IN THE MATTER OF A MEMORIAL TO  
THE HONORABLE DAVID ZENOFF.

## ORDER

As an expression of the esteem and respect held by the Bench and Bar of the State of Nevada for the late Honorable David Zenoff, who passed away in La Costa, California, on October 3, 2005,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the following memorial be printed in the next published volume of the Nevada Reports.

Dated this 7th day of July, 2009.

## BY THE COURT

JAMES W. HARDESTY, *Chief Justice*

RON D. PARRAGUIRRE  
*Associate Justice*

MICHAEL L. DOUGLAS  
*Associate Justice*

MICHAEL A. CHERRY  
*Associate Justice*

NANCY M. SAITTA  
*Associate Justice*

MARK GIBBONS  
*Associate Justice*

KRISTINA PICKERING  
*Associate Justice*

## MEMORIAL

David Zenoff, former Justice and Chief Justice of the Nevada Supreme Court, demonstrated dedication, ability, and leadership in all areas of his life—in his legal career, in his involvement in his community, and in his family.

Justice Zenoff was born March 8, 1916, in Amherst, Wisconsin. He earned both his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Wisconsin. While pursuing his undergraduate degree, he met and fell in love with Beverly Banks, and the two were married.

Justice Zenoff originally planned on becoming a journalist. He credited Harry Stuhldreher, famed Notre Dame quarterback in the 1920s and later the football coach at the University of Wisconsin, with convincing him to become a lawyer instead. While Justice Zenoff was covering football games as a journalist, he said that Mr. Stuhldreher “brought me a malted milk and advised me to go into law.” Justice Zenoff took the advice and was admitted to the Wisconsin bar in 1940.

Justice Zenoff's legal career was interrupted by service in the United States Marine Corps during World War II, from 1942 to 1946. He served as a major in the Marines and was awarded the Bronze Star in the Okinawa Campaign.

After Mrs. Zenoff's mother traveled through Las Vegas and commented that it was a growing place with a lot of opportunities, Justice and Mrs. Zenoff decided to move there. Justice Zenoff was admitted to the Nevada bar in 1948. He joined a law firm that was a predecessor to the firm now known as Jones Vargas. While in private practice, Justice Zenoff served as an associate Las Vegas Municipal Judge. In 1958, Governor Charles Russell appointed him as a district court judge in Clark County.

While a district court judge, Justice Zenoff led efforts to reform the juvenile justice system. He proposed a separate system of juvenile justice and founded the Spring Mountain Youth Camp, a correctional facility for male juveniles adjudicated delinquent in the juvenile justice system. The camp is still in existence and provides for the educational, medical, social, and therapeutic needs of its residents. Justice Zenoff won numerous awards for his work in juvenile justice, including the juvenile detention facility in Las Vegas being named in his honor.

In 1965, he was appointed to serve as a supreme court justice and was elected to two more terms. Justice Zenoff spent a total of 12 years on the court, 2 of them as Chief Justice. After his retirement from the supreme court, Justice Zenoff became the state's first senior justice, which allowed him to participate as a justice in certain cases, and he continued to contribute to the judiciary for many years after his formal retirement.

Justice Zenoff authored numerous opinions of the Nevada Supreme Court and was proud that some of his work as a justice was noted by the United States Supreme Court. For example, in analyzing a federal kidnapping statute that provided for a penalty of death if the jury recommended it, the United States Supreme Court noted that "[i]n an opinion by Justice Zenoff . . . the Supreme Court of Nevada . . . held unconstitutional a state penalty scheme imposing capital punishment for forcible rape resulting in great bodily injury if the jury by their verdict affix the death penalty." *United States v. Jackson*, 390 U.S. 570, 583 n.24 (1968) (internal quotation marks omitted). The opinion to which the Court was referring was *Spillers v. State*, 84 Nev. 23, 436 P.2d 18 (1968). (A few years later, the Nevada Supreme Court overruled *Spillers* in part on other grounds in *Bean v. State*, 86 Nev. 80, 465 P.2d 133 (1970)—interestingly, the majority opinion in *Bean* was also authored by Justice Zenoff.)

In addition to his admirable work in the Nevada legal community, Justice Zenoff also dedicated himself to endeavors outside of the courtroom. He was devoted in his faith and was a leader in the

Las Vegas Jewish community. He was among the founders of Temple Beth Sholom in Las Vegas and chaired the building committee for its construction. He also sometimes served as a judge of a different sort—as a judge of boxing matches.

Justice Zenoff was very dedicated to his family. He and his wife Beverly were married for 65 years, until his death. Justice and Mrs. Zenoff had three children and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Justice Zenoff loved playing tennis and his family continues to be passionate about the game. The Zenoff family was active—in addition to tennis, the family enjoyed golf, attending football games, and traveling.

Like her father, Terrie Zenoff Sanders became an attorney, and before her retirement was an assistant attorney general for the State of Arizona. David Zenoff, Jr., worked as a facilities coordinator for Southwest Gas Corporation, where his father had served on the board of directors for many years. Lisa Zenoff Harris runs her own marketing communications consulting company. In addition to being a devoted husband and father, Justice Zenoff was a loving son to his parents and a committed brother to his five siblings.

Justice Zenoff also holds a place in popular history. On May 1, 1967, he performed the marriage of Elvis Presley and Priscilla Beaulieu. People mentioned this fact frequently, and Justice Zenoff was good-natured about it, claiming that one enjoyable benefit of being a judge in Nevada was meeting celebrities and presiding over their marriages.

Justice Zenoff died on October 3, 2005, in La Costa, California, at the age of 89. Upon learning of his death, former Supreme Court Justice Cliff Young succinctly summarized Justice Zenoff's contribution to Nevada's legal history by stating that Justice Zenoff "was a good leveling influence on the court. He was a credit to the judiciary."