

Alan Greiman, state legislator and appellate court judge known for negotiating acumen, dies

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Justice Alan Greiman reads the oath of office during the Inauguration of the Illinois House of Representatives on Jan. 11, 2017, at Sangamon Auditorium on the University of Illinois Springfield campus. (Erin Hooley / Chicago Tribune)

Alan Greiman was a Democratic state legislator before becoming a judge in Cook County and then on the Illinois appellate bench.

A onetime assistant majority leader in the state House of Representatives, legislative leaders frequently tapped Greiman to oversee negotiations of the biggest issues in the General Assembly that year.

“He was a man of amazing wit and mind and was very smart,” said former state Rep. and former House Majority Leader Barbara Flynn Currie. “He did a great job negotiating every difficult issue that came before the Illinois General Assembly during his tenure there.”

Greiman, 90, died of heart failure Feb. 14 at his Gold Coast home, said his wife of 33 years, former state Rep. Julie Hamos.

Born Alan Joel Greiman in Chicago, Greiman grew up in the South Shore neighborhood and graduated from South Shore High School. He received bachelor's and law degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Greiman's early career was with a small Chicago law firm, handling wills, divorces and trusts, then moving into real estate law..

During the 1960s, Greiman lived in Skokie and ran unsuccessfully for village trustee in 1969. Greiman remained interested in local politics, and was close with longtime Democratic township committeeman Cal Sutker, who later was a state representative and a Cook County Board commissioner.

In 1972, Greiman was appointed to a state House seat vacated by a lawmaker who had been appointed a judge. He went on to win election and serve in the legislature for 15 years, representing a district in the north suburbs and parts of the city's North and Northwest sides.

A political progressive, Greiman sponsored several bills that did not come to fruition, including the first bill in the country banning discrimination on the basis of age, according to his wife. He was a sponsor of the Equal Rights Amendment and of legislation barring discrimination based on sexual orientation, although that latter bill did become law much later.

He also won some, sponsoring the Illinois Domestic Violence Act and a bill protecting newsrooms from unreasonable searches. In 1986, Greiman helped

marshal through the General Assembly the \$120 million funding by the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority for a new stadium for the Chicago White Sox.

“He was a masterful negotiator because he knew where the money was,” said former state Senate President John Cullerton, who served alongside Greiman in the state House. “He sat down at negotiations between God knows how many different organizations, and it didn’t matter because almost every issue dealt with money. He knew where people could compromise because of that.” In mid-1987, Greiman was appointed a Cook County Circuit Court judge, and he won election to the bench in 1988.

“He felt he was young enough that he could make being a judge another career,” Hamos said.

Greiman was assigned to the Law Division, which handles higher-stakes personal injury and other lawsuits seeking monetary damages.

In 1991, Greiman was appointed to a vacancy as a justice on the Illinois Appellate Court. He later was elected by his peers to be chief justice of the 1st District for 10 years.

“When he became a judge, he used all those skills he had learned in terms of negotiating and listening and discerning,” said Cook County Commissioner Larry Suffredin, a longtime friend. “And when he got to the appellate court, he helped put together a mediation program which has been phenomenally successful at getting people to resolve their differences.”

Hamos said her husband liked “everything” about being a judge, including the intellectual challenge and the position of actually making law.

“He loved the law and he loved helping people,” she said. “In some ways, he missed the trial court (after joining the appellate court) because he liked the action of talking to the parties, to the lawyers and the litigators.”

Greiman stepped down as appellate judge in 2008 after losing a countywide primary for reelection.

Greiman also enjoyed cooking and cigars.

“He was a phenomenal cook — probably chef-level,” Suffredin said.

“Whenever he did a meal, it was also like a travelogue you got — he would go and buy the bread for the meal at D’Amato’s Bakery, and he would go to the South Water Market to get certain avocados he wanted and he would go to Randolph Street to get the right leg of lamb.

“It was always amazing to watch him and the detail that was in his work as a judge and as a legislator and as a practicing lawyer was (also) in his preparation of food.”

Greiman’s first wife died when he was 32, and a second marriage ended in divorce. In addition to his third wife, he is survived by three daughters, Laurie Greiman, Judy Greiman and Bunny Evans; three stepdaughters, Lori Coyle, Jodi Moran and Tami Friedman; seven grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Services were held.