

Judge Archie Gingold helped kids, reshaped courts

● He will be remembered as “a St. Paul institution,” Mayor Chris Coleman said, for decades of work in the courts and Ramsey County.

By CURT BROWN
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Archie Gingold, a stern but big-hearted judge who reshaped how Ramsey County courts handled juvenile and alcoholic offenders, died Thursday night after a brief illness. He was 97 and spent all his years in St. Paul.

“He was a St. Paul institution, and this is really a loss,” Mayor Chris Coleman said Friday.

U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman, a former St. Paul mayor and a lawyer, said: “At times, the judge could be a little crusty, but behind that facade, this city was in his bones and he really cared about this community.”

Born in 1908 to Lithuanian immigrants, Gingold rose from the hard-scrabble West 7th Street neighborhood to own prominent chunks of real estate in downtown St. Paul.

A graduate of Mechanic Arts High School in the 1920s, Gingold went on to Macalester College and studied law at the College of St. Thomas. He was

the last surviving member of the original St. Thomas Law School, which folded in the 1930s. Gingold received an honorary degree in 2004 with the first graduating class of the new University of St. Thomas Law School.

Gingold, a Republican, was appointed to the St. Paul municipal bench in 1954 by Republican Gov. C. Elmer Anderson. A DFLer, Gov. Orville Freeman, tapped him for the Ramsey County district bench in 1960. He spent most of the next 18 years in the juvenile court.

“He loved kids and handled them with a gentle touch,” said Bernard Gingold, 88, of Edina — Archie’s brother. “His favorite day was Wednesday when he’d finalize adoptions and have his clerks run out and buy cakes and turn his courtroom into a little celebration.”

Mimi Gingold of Cincinnati, the youngest of his three daughters, said, “He touched a zillion-trillion lives and always loved Wednesdays because that’s when he finalized adoptions and said he could bring families together.

“We’ve run into people from Ha-

waii to lodges up north who say our dad helped turn them around as kids.”

Retired Chief Ramsey County District Judge Larry Cohen, another former St. Paul mayor and attorney, recalled how Gingold would pound his fist and leave young offenders “shivering and shaking” before handing down light sentences. Cohen said Gingold helped start several group homes for troubled St. Paul youngsters and was credited with changing how the courts viewed alcoholics, insisting on treatment for their disease before that was common.

“He revolutionized Ramsey County courts,” said the Rev. John Malone of the Assumption Catholic Church in St. Paul, who worked as a public defender in front of Gingold in the 1970s.

Gingold met his late wife, Helen, in 1945 when he went to the hospital for an appendectomy. She was his nurse. Besides his brother and daughter, Mimi, survivors include daughters Sandra Iverson of St. Paul, and Carla Feldhamer of Carbondale, Ill. He had eight grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

Funeral services are scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Sunday at Mount Zion Tem-



Archie Gingold, in early 1980s. He was put on the St. Paul bench by GOP Gov. C. Elmer Anderson in '54. In '60, DFL Gov. Orville Freeman put him on the district bench.

ple, 1300 Summit Av., St. Paul. Burial will follow immediately at the Acadia Park Cemetery in Mendota Heights with a reception and 5 p.m. shiva at Mount Zion.