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Retired Cook judge, 'generous spirit' James 'Hank' Henry dies at 71

GRACE BARBIC

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James F. "Hank" Henry, a retired Cook County Circuit Court judge, was the type of guy who was always willing to extend a helping hand, even for a stranger, his friend and former colleague Faustin "Frosty" Pipal, Jr. said.

Pipal and Henry worked together at Resolute Systems, LLC, where Pipal serves as a mediator.

Henry retired from Resolute Systems in 2017 and died Jan. 13 at age 71.

Pipal recalled a snowy Friday afternoon in February 2011 when he and Henry were walking in downtown Chicago and encountered a woman crying outside the courthouse in her wedding dress.

When the pair app-

roached the woman, they discovered plans for a wedding ceremony that day were devastated by the court's closure for Lincoln's birthday.

Pipal remembers looking over at Henry and saying "You can marry them, can't you?"

Pipal said without hesitation, Henry agreed. Henry knocked on the window to get a guard to open the door and married the couple in the lobby with Pipal as the witness, he said.

Pipal said this is one of his fondest memories with Henry because it "really personifies him."

"We will always remember his kindness, generous spirit, and his desire to give dignity to everybody that appeared before him or that he even met on the street," Pipal said. "He

treated everybody the same. ... I think that's his legacy."

Henry graduated from St. Norbert College in 1973 and from DePaul University College of Law in 1977. He took graduate courses at the University of Illinois Chicago from 1979 to 1980.

Early in his career, Henry worked as an assistant Cook County state's attorney in the Civil Division from 1978 until 1983.

From 1983 until 1988, he was a partner at Gould & Ratner LLP, where he specialized in real estate tax, zoning and environmental matters, administrative, trial and appellate litigation.

Robert A. Carson, senior counsel at Gould & Ratner, considered Henry a good friend as the two were both partners at the

firm around the same time.

"He had a real gift for connecting with people," Carson said. "He was a very warm person and he was a great storyteller. He had sort of that Irishman's gift for telling a great story. He was a great guy, and he was a true friend."

Henry was elected to the bench of the Cook County Circuit Court in 1988. Over the course of his judicial career, Henry held assignments in the Chancery Division, Law Division and County Division.

He retired from the bench in 2007 but continued work in the legal industry.

He served as of counsel at the firm that was then Meckler Bulger & Tilson LLP until 2011, when he transitioned to mediation.