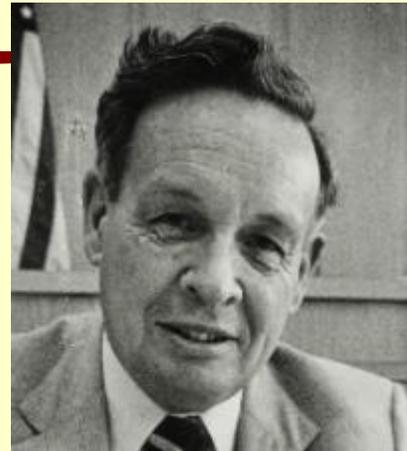




Norbert J. "Coley" Griffin

Norbert J. "Coley" Griffin, age 92 years of West Bend, passed away Sunday, October 18, 2009 at Froedert Memorial Lutheran Hospital.

Coley was born on December 6, 1916 to Raymond and Marcella (nee Seeber) Griffin in Jefferson. He married Anne (nee Snyder) on July 8, 1950. Coley was the last Gregg Shorthand court reporter in Wisconsin and was a nationally recognized court reporter. He retired when he was 86 years old and was a proud veteran of WWII, serving in the Navy. Coley was a scratch golfer who once held 3 simultaneous club championships. Although the most important things in his life were his Catholic faith, his family and his friends.



Coley is survived by his loving children Patrick (Lin) Griffin, Mary (Stuart) Carlson and Megan (Michael) Welsh. He is further survived by his grandchildren, most of whom claim to be "Papa's favorite", Maggie (Erik) Henke, Amy Griffin, Caitlin (Eric) Janke, Bridget (Jayson) Morales, Brendan (Catreese) Carlson, Annie and Colleen Welsh, Cole and Jim Griffin, great-grandchildren Connor, Nolan and Leilani, many loving relatives and friends including Joyce Griffin, John and Fanny Griffin, Pat, Luly and Tom Snyder, Joan (David) Hughs and Ramon Aguirre. He is preceded in death by his parents, loving wife Anne, sister Margaret Torgeson, brothers Howard and Ray, cherished sons Kevin and Michael and brother-in-law John Snyder, Jr.

In Memory of "Coley" Griffin

Coley Griffin was the backbone of the Washington County Judicial System for 50 years. When I started practicing here in 1960 he already was a veteran reporter and he kept it up for many more years. Coley was a friend to the lawyers, the Judges, and all the people in the system. He helped young and old lawyers alike; patiently answering questions which I'm sure he had heard a hundred times before.

I also fondly remember his golf expertise. He got me the first set of good irons I ever had and was always ready to suggest solutions to any golf problems. He will always be remembered by us older lawyers. What a good person.

Judge Richard T. Becker



“Pen in Hand” *Courtesy Amy Rabideau Silvers of the Journal Sentinel*

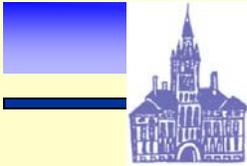
After nearly 70 years in courtrooms - and transcribing hundreds of millions of words - Coley Griffin finally laid down his pen. That's right. Pen. "When I started reporting there were no machine writers in Wisconsin - none," Griffin told the Milwaukee Sentinel as he planned to retire in 1983. "Everybody wrote with a pen in Gregg shorthand, Pitman or some variation of the Pitman."

Retirement didn't last long. He was soon tapped for freelance and part-time work, again using his stockpile of discontinued fine-point, Eversharp fountain pens and purple ink, the latter because it was easier on the eyes. "He worked up until he was 86, driving from West Bend to Juneau in Dodge County a couple days a week to report cases for the reserve judges," said daughter Megan Welsh. Real retirement came in 2003, after 68 years in courtrooms. "He was still driving in December and playing golf up until last year," she said.

Norbert J. Griffin - better known as Coley - died of congestive heart failure. He was 92. He was born and raised in Jefferson. The nickname came from a golfer when Griffin was a young caddy with coal-black hair.



Circuit Court Chamber, January 3, 1950, First Session. Judge Milton Meister, Frank “Cap” Wilson (left), Clerk of the Circuit Court for Ozaukee County, and Norbert “Coley” Griffin of West Bend, Court Reporter for the 13th Judicial District. Coley, a well known golfer, was reporter for Judge Edward Gehl for eight years before Judge Gehl went to the Supreme Court.



“Pen in Hand” (cont.)

He first learned shorthand in high school, winning a Gregg Expert Medal for passing the speed of 140 words per minute. Soon someone heard just how fast he was and offered him the chance to transcribe a murder trial as best he could. That was worth \$2 a day over a nine-day trial, according to a profile in the Wisconsin Reporter publication. Griffin liked that.

He didn't have the money for formal training during the Depression, so he studied on his own using a \$7 textbook. He landed a job as an official reporter. By 1941, he was working with the 12th Judicial Circuit Court, which included Washington, Ozaukee, Dodge and Waukesha, mostly in Washington County.

In 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. "When a personnel officer noticed Coley was a court reporter, Coley skipped boot camp and was reporting a court-martial case his second day in the Navy," the Wisconsin Reporter stated.

Pen in hand, he served for the next four years. Other Navy duty included serving during the trial of two Englishmen and an Irishman accused of mutiny. "That Irishman had a brogue so thick you could have sliced it with a knife," Griffin said. The other defendants weren't much easier to understand, but he carried on, picking up more and more speed as time went on.

Griffin was later found to take shorthand at 260 words per minute.

One of his most difficult jobs was a three-week trial concerning a Cedarburg power plant explosion replete with words such as *oxyacetylene* and *potassium dichromate*. He remembered one lawyer talked fast and had poor diction. "There was 15 minutes of lay testimony," Griffin said. "The rest was all metallurgists, chemists, mechanical and chemical engineers, and plant experts."

In another trial, Griffin kept on writing even as an excited witness demonstrated how he had been assaulted by grabbing and shaking the court reporter.

There were limits to the soothing powers of purple ink.

One unusual honor came in 2007, with his inclusion in the "Men of Court Reporting" fundraising calendar for the National Court Reporters Association. The rest of the men were much younger, most of them "easy on the eyes," his daughter said. Griffin appeared on the December page, holding a giant pencil and notebook with shorthand columns for naughty and nice.



Friends Remember Coley Griffin

Several hundred people paid their respects October 21st as funeral services were held at Holy Angels Catholic Church for Norbert 'Coley' Griffin. Fr. Gerald Brittain presided over the services which included memories of an eagle-eye golfer, a quick pen and a love of the Irish.

Daughter Mary Carlson spoke fondly of her father. "He read three newspapers a day, he ghost wrote papers for several of his children and was especially proud of the A's his papers got at Marquette and Notre Dame," she said. "Our sassy mother used to say, when God made your father he broke the mold and then he beat the hell out of the mold maker." Daughter Megan Welsh talked about Coley's gift for "making everybody feel like they were his favorite." "Everybody loved Coley. And when my parents were out in public and the rave reviews would get to be too much for Mom she'd use her hand and flash the number of years they were married, and then mimic drawing a halo around her head," said Welsh.

Coley Griffin was a fixture at the West Bend Country Club. He also played the links at Hon-E-Kor in Kewaskum. A shot called the 'Jefferson-knock-down' was apparently one of Coley's favorites where he'd use a six iron and hit into the wind, keeping the ball low it would bounce on the green and into the cup.

There was an array of golfing pictures on display at the church along with a black and white photo of Coley in a three-point football stance, Coley with a bunch of kids on his lap and in his Navy uniform. Flowers ran the length of the altar at the church. There was an arrangement of about three dozen white flowers from the National Court Reporters Association; the card was written entirely in shorthand. The note paid tribute to Griffin's stellar 68-year career as a court reporter.

"He was sharp. Always very sharp," said Jane Schneider who was mentored by Griffin when she was just a fledgling court reporter. "He was always concerned about how you were doing. He gave support because a court reporting career is its own little world," she said.

Ending her remarks at the service, Megan Welsh closed her tribute by coaxing the congregation to sing the Irish lullaby Toora Loora Loora to her father.

Toora, loora, loora
Toora, loora, li
Toora, loora, loora
Hush, now, don't you cry

Toora, loora, loora
Toora, loora, li
Toora, loora, loora
It's an Irish lullaby...