

On October 18, 2009, the ink ran dry for pen writers in Wisconsin with the passing of Norbert J. "Coley" Griffin, age 92, of West Bend, Wisconsin. While the era of Gregg Shorthand court reporters in Wisconsin has officially come to an end, the WCRA is flourishing thanks to the dedication and hard work of Coley, who not only helped form our Association but remained an active member right up to the end. Coley served on WSRA's Board of Directors for several years, serving as President in 1948. In 2003, he was WCRA's first Lifetime Achievement Award recipient. Coley also served three different terms on NSRA's Gregg Clinic Committee; one being when Charles L. Swem was the chairman of said committee, and two terms when Mary Louise Gilman was the chairperson. Most recently, Coley appeared as "Mr. December" in NCRA's 2007 Men of Court Reporting fundraising calendar.

Coley's illustrative court reporting career of 68 years ended when he retired, for the second time, in 2003; the first retirement being 20 years earlier after serving the State of Wisconsin as an official reporter for 48 years. The only interruption to his State career was a four-year stint in the U.S. Navy; but that, too, was in the capacity of a court reporter.

Coley set a standard for avoiding the norm in all phases of his career. First and foremost, Coley was, in his words, a self-taught 19-year-old neophyte reporter. With only two years of high school shorthand, Coley studied and practiced religiously from a \$7 book he purchased authored by Charles Lee Swem in conjunction with John Robert Gregg. This book soon became Coley's bible. After being an assistant court reporter for a year, (which included reporting and transcribing, mowing, shoveling, chauffeuring for his judge, and being paid \$75 a month) Coley bypassed being a county court reporter and jumped right in, feet first, as a circuit court reporter in Wisconsin in 1936, traveling the circuit of Jefferson, Rock, and Green Counties, for which he was paid \$250 a month. In 1942, when Coley enlisted in the Navy, he was asked to bypass boot camp; and on his second day in the service, he was reporting his first court martial – before he had acquired a uniform. By the time of Wisconsin's Court Reorganization in 1978, when all trial courts became circuit courts and almost all reporters used machines, there was Coley, pen in hand, reporting until the time of his retirement.

Coley's love of his profession is abundantly clear, not only through his accomplishments but through his legacy. Many a young reporter, and older too, after having contacted Coley for advice or direction, has conquered a problem, mastered a skill, or acquired employment. If you ever talked to Coley, you were certain to be motivated to become a better reporter. If you ever met Coley, you're sure to remember. And, if Coley ever met you, rest assured, he remembered you. Coley's love of his Association is evident by the fact that while in his 80s he was still attending conferences, giving counsel to students and reporters alike, offering input for newsletters, and donating raffle and door prize gifts. If you had the distinction of becoming President of WCRA, you most certainly would receive a congratulatory phone call from Coley thanking you for your service and cheering you on to do great things.

While being a court reporter, and a scratch golfer who once held three simultaneous club championships, were a big part of this Irishman's life, the most important things in Coley's life were his Catholic faith, his family, and his friends. If you were lucky enough to be on Coley's Christmas card list, you got to see his pride beaming through with the addition of each new member to his family. If you were really lucky, you were privileged to call him "Papa." It's been said that Coley has transcribed hundreds of thousands of words in his career, and we believe that there have been equally as many wonderful words written or spoken about Coley. He was always a positive force by his mere presence, and he had a gift for making everybody feel as if they were his favorite. (A few of us are fighting over that distinction). To learn more about Coley, visit the WCRA website at [www.wicourtreporters.org](http://www.wicourtreporters.org) under About WCRA, History, Norbert "Coley" Griffin.

The WCRA would like to say good-bye to Coley with our own parting words:

Our Past Began With You  
Our Present Is Because Of You  
Our Future Will Always Know You  
Your Contributions Will Live On Forever