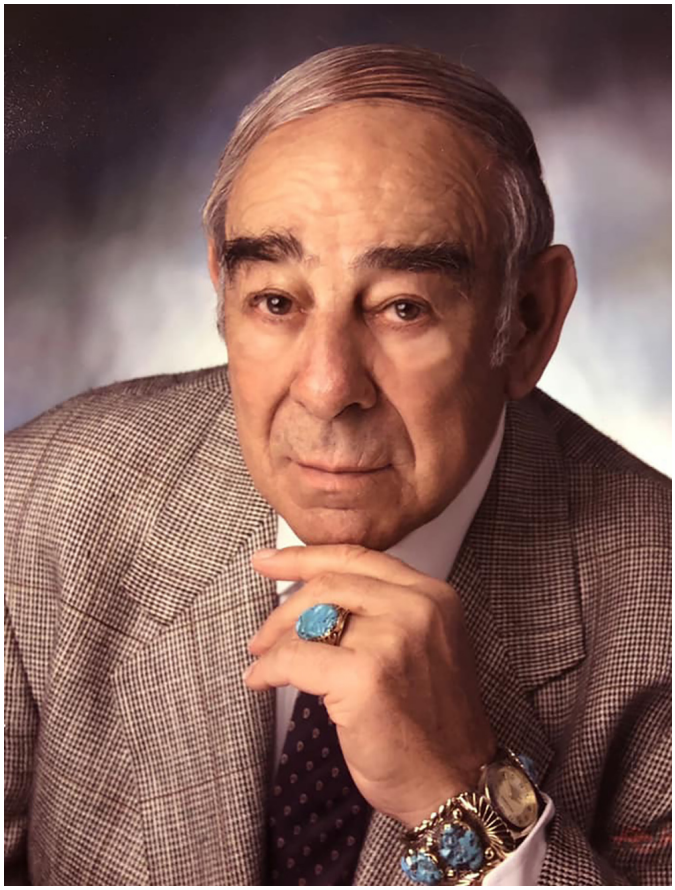
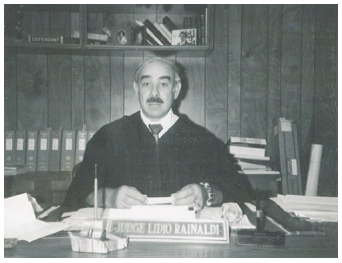





JUDGE LIDIO RAINALDI

A welcoming presence whose light shines on

Lidio Rainaldi, who died last month at the age of 90, was more to Gallup than a returned state senator. Rainaldi was a force of nature across the state and in the local community.

EARLY SERVICE

Rainaldi was born in Gamerco in 1929, the son of Ugo and Rosina Rainaldi. His parents came from Italy in 1915, when his father found work in the local coal mines. Rainaldi graduated from Cathedral High School in 1947.

He attended the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, and was drafted into the U. S. Navy where he served as a yeoman for four years during the Korean War. The yeoman is a clerk who records the ship’s activity.

When he returned to Gallup, he met and married his wife Helen, who was visiting from Trinidad, Colo. They recently celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary.

Rainaldi’s first job was as a Veterans Service Officer in 1954. He traveled across the Four Corners to help families of war victims get their benefits. He worked in this capacity for four years.

During the same era, the mines and railroad were expanding, and people were moving to the area to work. Some of them came from Europe and Asia, and many didn’t speak English.

Rainaldi began helping these workers with their legal paperwork; work permits and census and tax forms. In working with the foreign consulates, Rainaldi assisted many immigrants in their efforts to become U. S. citizens.

For the Italian immigrants, the President of Italy recognized his service, and awarded him with the distinction of *"Cavaliere"*, or Honorary Knighthood. This designation is the highest honor the Italian government can bestow on a foreigner, to honor and express appreciation for serving their country in extraordinary ways.

WORKING IN GALLUP

In 1958, Rainaldi was appointed city judge in Gallup. This was an elected position for which he had to be re-elected every two years. While he was learning the law, he witnessed the alcoholism in the area, and initiated a number of programs to address this disease, the first being a DWI school.

Every week, Rainaldi would bring those in jail for drunkenness, or DWI, as well as their families, to his courtroom to educate and show films about alcoholism. He picked up the day-old donuts from Puritan Bakery and Helen made and served the coffee to attendees. Knowing he had this film for only a week's time, Rainaldi also set up meetings in Mentmore and Zuni, bringing this same program to them. He ran this program for more than 10 years.

In talking to repeat offenders of drunkenness, Rainaldi heard many individuals say that they were using alcohol as pain relief for untreated illnesses. He worked with Gallup Indian Medical Center and arranged transport of those in jail to the hospital, where he made sure they received a proper medical exam, and any needed medical care.

Rainaldi also originated a Court Honor Program in 1961. It allowed those serving time for DWI to be dismissed from jail to go to work during the day, so they wouldn't lose their jobs, and then return to jail at night and on weekends to finish their sentences. This way they could continue to provide for their families.

Seeing many alcoholics dying on the streets, Rainaldi also started a program that is now called *Protective Custody.*
This allowed the police to pick up anyone passed out from intoxication and bring them to the jail, without any violation or charge. It provided them with a safe place to sleep and an opportunity to get help.

Each year at the meetings of the N.M. State Courts and the American Judges Association, Rainaldi introduced his programs and educated other judges on this issue.

The Court Honor and PC programs were adopted statewide, and in many other areas across the country. His DWI programs were eventually taken over by the new AA programs.

In attending these seminars, Rainaldi brought new ideas back to the Gallup community. Early on, he convinced the mayor and city council to use the monies raised in his courts to purchase new technology for better efficiency. The Gallup courts were one of the first to be computerized in the state, and Gallup police were the first in the state to use a new device commonly known as the breathalyzer.

Rainaldi's term as magistrate judge in Gallup also required that he travel to Zuni and preside there. He later wrote federal grants for monies to build Zuni a proper courthouse, and train and hire local judges. This same building still serves their courts today.

Rainaldi's magistrate court, with his long-time co-workers - Monica Martinez, Cindy Sanders, Tina Ross, Pam Garcia, and Kristy Jaramillo - was recognized as the No. 1 court in New Mexico by the Administrative Office of the Courts, and was used as a training base for new judges and clerks throughout the state.

Rainaldi served both as city and state judge for 28 years until 1986 when the courts were divided. He continued on as the state judge, retiring in 1998, serving a total of 40 years. He was a member of the American Judges Association and served as president of both the State Municipal Judges Association and the State Magistrate Association.

WORK IN THE SENATE

In 2000, Rainaldi was elected to the New Mexico Senate, where he served two terms to represent District 4, which includes Cibola and McKinley counties.

As a freshman, Rainaldi was appointed to the Senate Judiciary Committee. With his expertise in municipal and magistrate legislation, he helped create state laws that positively impacted the courts, reduced citizen taxes, and raised wages for the magistrate judges across New Mexico.

During a heated partisan debate, Rainaldi made a statement which raised some eyebrows, “The election is over. We’re no longer Democrats and Republicans. We’re here to serve the people.”

He later commented, “Well, that didn’t go over too well. But now they know where I stand.”

As senator, Rainaldi was respected on both sides of the aisle. In addition, he was often approached to help others outside his district.

Rainaldi worked closely with local city governments and the chapter houses in obtaining resources. He was chosen to chair the Democratic Caucus.

Working with a Republican governor, he secured the monies needed for the Gallup courthouse expansion. Retirement didn’t slow him down. Seeing the dire need for a dialysis center, he personally raised funds for a new building, and worked with the New Mexico Cancer Center to bring their clinic to Gallup.

Rainaldi was an active member of the Catholic Church and served in the Order of the Knights of St. Gregory. He was also a member of the VFW, Elks Lodge, and an honorary member of the Rotary.

FOR THE PEOPLE

As judge, Rainaldi officiated at marriage ceremonies, often two or three a week, for 40 years. For some families, he officiated for three generations. He often said he was giving them a “life sentence.”

Rainaldi and his wife Helen raised two children. Ruth Lynn Devoti of Albuquerque, and Lidio Rainaldi Jr., of Gallup.

Rainaldi was an avid athlete, lettering in football and basketball in high school. During his off hours he went out on the golf course. One year, he won the city golf tournament. His bowling team often scored at the top locally, and he also won regional tournaments.

At his retirement from the senate, Rainaldi said he attributed his achievements to his wife Helen, as she was always there by his side, helping in any way she could.

By Cody Begaye
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