

Road to the Robes: A Federal Judge Recollects Young Years & Early Times

Ruggero J. Aldisert

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Road to the Robes: A Federal Judge Recollects Young Years & Early Times Ruggero J. Aldisert "Judges come to their robes bearing the stigmata of past experience." If this old saying is true, then this book describes the stigmata of Ruggero J. Aldisert, Senior U.S. Circuit Judge, a distinguished member of the Greatest Generation who's still active as a judge on the second highest court in the land, just a notch below the U.S. Supreme Court. There is a huge sweep in these pages. Born in 1919, the author takes the reader from his early childhood to 1968, when he first put on robes as a U.S. Circuit Judge. You'll find no stodgy writing here, nary a "whereas" and "aforesaid," but it's what the author says in his preface-a greatgrandfather sitting back with the young ones and reminiscing how it was to grow up before dial telephones and when the first radio was a crystal set powered with two batteries and you listened with a set of earphones.But it's more than family memoirs; there's a lot of history set in the Twenties, and Thirties, and most of the time it wasn't to the tune of "Happy Days are Here Again." Judge Aldisert grew up as the son of an Italian immigrant in a Pennsylvania steel mill and coal mining town, remembers the Twenties when men worked 12-hour shifts, except every other Sunday when it was a 24-hour shift, came face to face with the Great Depression, the spread of world conflict during his 1937-1941 college years, and describes World War II service as Marine Corps officer in the Pacific. He gives an insider's view of a lawyer who tried both civil and criminal cases, of life as a Pittsburgh trial court judge, and of the rocky road to nomination by President Lyndon B. Johnson and confirmation by the U.S. Senate in 1968. The opening page is a harbinger of things to come. His mother has her arms around the author, then aged three, and his brother one year older. She is sobbing, "Please don't hurt my babies," as they peered through her bedroom window at a procession of hooded and robed members of the Ku Klux Klan who walked in a silent circle in the Aldise



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