

FROM THE COURTS

Connecticut Remembers Family Law Judge That Inspired 'Judging Amy'



Called as a pioneer for women attorneys and judges, Judge Frederica Brenneman's 1953 Harvard Law class was the first to admit women to the prestigious Ivy League school.

by Robert Storace

Judge Frederica Brenneman, known as an advocate for children and whose legal work inspired the television show "Judging Amy," has died. She was 94.

Brenneman, who served as a judge trial referee until she retired at 90, died March 15 in California after a long illness.

Remembered called as a pioneer for women attorneys and judges, Brenneman's 1953 Harvard Law class was the first to admit women to the prestigious Ivy League school. In addition, she became the state's second female judge when she was named to serve on the then-Connecticut Juvenile Court in 1967. She later went on the Superior Court when the state trial courts merged in 1978. She served in that role until 1996 when she became a judge trial referee based in Westport. She retired in July 2017.

"She was most definitely seen as a trailblazer," said Pullman & Comley member Diane Whitney, who knew Brenneman professionally and socially. "She turned what was known as the 'kiddie court' into a serious court and gave it the respect it needed and maintained high standards. She also advocated for better court conditions."

In 1979, Brenneman helped form "Children in Placement," which monitors and supports children in the state's foster care system.

Brenneman, a mother of three, had a soft spot for children, Whitney and others said.

"She loved her work because she knew she could make a difference, and she did," said Whitney, who appeared before the judge dozens of times in the late 1980s and early 1990s representing the state as an assistant attorney general. "Most judges can't wait to get off juvenile court, but she loved it and lobbied for it."

Canton solo practitioner Jennifer Davis has been an attorney for 34 years and, for most of those years, dealt exclusively with family law and juvenile practice.

"She had a compassion for children and their parents and what they were going through, and that is what I loved

about her," Davis said Tuesday. "She didn't assume parents in juvenile court settings were bad people. She understood that they had bad circumstances. Unless a parent had done something truly egregious, she gave them hope that they could turn it around and get their children back and that's huge in juvenile court."

Davis and other attorneys who appeared before Brenneman said she listened to their concerns; something that made them feel like they were being heard in often-difficult circumstances.

"She really listened to the arguments you made and she wasn't interested in being the smartest person in the room," Davis said. "She allowed you to make your arguments and she inquired; she asked questions about your arguments. She didn't pre-judge cases."

Bob Katz, an attorney for nearly four decades, said he appeared before the judge representing children and parents at least a dozen times.

"It all started with her listening and it continued with an open-mindedness beyond the assumption that the state must be right. She listened to everyone's point of view and she studied before ruling on a case," said Katz, a partner with Loudon, Katz & McGrath Family Law in Hartford.

Brenneman was also the inspiration for the television series "Judging Amy," which ran on CBS from 1999 to 2005. The judge's daughter, actor Amy Brenneman, played Judge Amy Gray, a Harvard-educated New York corporate attorney. But the show was inspired by the judge's life and work, and episodes even included real court cases the judge presided over, although the names and specific facts of cases were changed. The judge served as an adviser on the drama.

"As an attorney, you'd be watching the show and would say the fact patterns would sound familiar and then you'd realize that it was based on a case you had," Whitney said of the television show.

Robert Storace covers legal trends, lawsuits and analysis for the Connecticut Law Tribune, an ALM affiliate of the Daily Business Review. Contact him at rstorace@alm.com. On Twitter: @RobertSCTLaw.



CITY OF DORAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

All residents, property owners and other interested parties are hereby notified of a **COUNCIL ZONING MEETING** on **April 28, 2021, beginning at 10:30 AM.**

General Public Comments: members of the public that wish to provide comments in writing may do so by emailing the City Clerk at cityclerk@cityofdoral.com. Comments must be submitted with your name and full address by **Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 5:00 pm**. The comments will be circulated to the elected officials and administration, as well as remain as a part of the record for the meeting.

Public Hearing Comments (Pre-Registration): interested parties that wish to speak on the Public Hearing item(s) **ONLY**, must register by **Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 5:00 pm** via this link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2550983937261710605>

Those individuals who do not register in advance will not be permitted to speak.

NOTE: Personal opinions and general statements are not considered "substantial competent evidence" for the record, and such testimony can have no effect on the Mayor and Council's final decision.

The meeting will be broadcasted live for members of the public to view on the City of Doral's website (<https://www.cityofdoral.com/government/city-clerk/council-meetings>) as well as Channel 77 and Facebook Live.

The City of Doral proposes to adopt the following Ordinance:

ORDINANCE No. 2021-14

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DORAL, FLORIDA, APPROVING/DENYING AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A SIX-MONTH MORATORIUM ON THE PROCESSING OF NEW DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS AND ON THE ISSUANCE OF DEVELOPMENT ORDERS AND PERMITS FOR PROPERTIES LOCATED WITHIN THE "DORAL DÉCOR DISTRICT"; PROVIDING FOR EXTENSION OF SAID MORATORIUM BY RESOLUTION; PROVIDING FOR VESTED RIGHTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

HEARING NO.: 21-04-DOR-10

APPLICANT: City of Doral

REQUEST: The City of Doral Staff is requesting Mayor and City Council approval of a six-month moratorium on the processing of applications and on the issuance of development orders and permits for properties located within the Doral Décor District.

Location Map



Inquiries regarding the item may be directed to the Planning and Zoning Department at 305-59-DORAL.

Pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes If a person decides to appeal any decisions made by the City Council with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings and, for such purpose, may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. This notice does not constitute consent by the City for introduction or admission of otherwise inadmissible or irrelevant evidence, nor does it authorize challenges or appeals not otherwise allowed by law. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person who are disabled and who need special accommodations to participate in this meeting because of that disability should contact the Planning and Zoning Department at 305-59-DORAL no later than three (3) business days prior to the proceeding.

Connie Diaz, MMC
City Clerk
City of Doral City of Doral