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## Our judges should run without party slots

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By KENNETH B. COLE For The Times

Money corrupts the system's ideals

I can still remember the words of wisdom that came over the phone from Dad that day in 1987 as I contemplated becoming a lawyer for hurt people

"I just don't think the good Lord will ever be mad at you for representing the little man," Dad said in that understated style he so often used when stating something of true significance.

Dad used to say things like that. Simple. Not too many words. Direct. But filled with a lifetime of wisdom. Like when he used to tell me that the Marines had a saying during World War II - "The difficult we do immediately. The impossible takes a little longer."

Eleven words that summed up what The Greatest Generation did in the Pacific. Eleven words that many men and women abided by in an epic conflict that saved the entire world from tyranny. Eleven words that, when put into practice, resulted in the deaths of many who were willing to sacrifice everything so that so many more could enjoy the freedoms of this country.

Of course, Dad used those words in a much less epic forum when he told them to me. To encourage me to work hard. To be a good son and brother. To be the best football player I could be. To be the best lawyer I could be.

You see, I really didn't know that much about being a lawyer. Dad was a retired sergeant first class. I was the first in my family to go to college, much less law school. All I knew was the law firms who came to school to offer us jobs were firms from big cities.

However, three years into being a lawyer and I was uncomfortable. I was using the talents the Lord gave me to help companies that truly had done wrong and that had hurt innocent people.

And there I was in Texas working for one of those big firms, not sure that I was being the best lawyer I could be because I was helping the people who had all the world could offer rather than helping those who had lost everything. My Dad's words about helping the little man rang true that day, and I've never regretted the decision to help regular folks.

Here I am back in Alabama, and I see so many people who want to say that our judicial system just doesn't work. They want to change it, not to be more fair but to be skewed in their favor. They want the field tilted in their direction so they can win even when they should not. They want the courts stacked with politicians who will rule for them despite what is right and true. Dad used to call such politicians "Republicrats" because there was no difference in the two political parties as far as he could tell.

I know the system does work, but I also know it could be better. One way to make it better is to elect judges who are not running for a particular political party. Whether you tend to vote Republican or Democrat, the bottom line is that politics has no place in our courthouses.

Just give me a level playing field. Just give me the "fair and impartial" judges that we are supposed to have. I think Dad would like it too, because he always believed the little man deserves a fair shake.

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