

# Friends mourn justice

By Pat Murphy  
Staff Writer

Former Michigan Supreme Court Justice Thomas Giles Kavanagh might be the exception to the old adage that a person is known by his enemies.

Kavanagh, 79, might not have had any, according to friends and associates contacted after his death Thursday at Beaumont Hospital.

True, Kavanagh's house was firebombed in 1975. And the Democratic Party — where his Irish roots ran deep — refused to renominate him, even though he was a sitting supreme court justice.

But even when Kavanagh — considered a "liberal" — disagreed, he was a gentleman, according to those who knew him best.

"We always disagreed politically," said Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson. "He was a staunch Democrat, and he considered me a hard-nosed Republican. But he was always nice about it. He never lost his temper."

Court of Appeals Judge Martin M. Doctoroff, a Birmingham resident, remembers working closely with Kavanagh on the court of appeals, where the former supreme court justice would be a visiting judge. "He was very compassionate, and he would go his own way. But there was never any rancor."

Kavanagh learned he had cancer Jan. 9, recalled his son, Kevin. "It was a shock, because he was strong and felt good."

Friends and family gravitated to the ailing Kavanagh to cherish whatever time they had left, said Kevin, the youngest Kavanagh — who, like his older brothers, Hayes and Thomas Jr., is an attorney.

One of those who gravitated to the Kavanagh home in Troy was supreme court justice Michael F. Kavanagh, who, besides being a



Thomas Giles Kavanagh  
Supreme Court Justice

• Memorial mass for at 11:30 a.m. Monday at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Catholic Church, 32340 Pierce in Birmingham.

• The family will receive friends and relatives for about 30 minutes prior to the mass and shortly after, there will be no wake.

• The body was donated to the University of Michigan Medical Center.

long-time family friend, had once clerked for Kavanagh and subsequently served on the state high court with him.

Kavanagh stopped by on the Saturday before his old friend was to be hospitalized. Also there were his wife Camilla (his first wife, Mary, died in 1985), sons Hayes and Thomas and several grandchildren.

"It was a tremendous visit," said Kavanagh. "We told lies and war stories and had a great time. He never missed a beat."

Kavanagh respected his old colleague. "He was not mired in old

ideas," Kavanagh said. "He was always ready to look at things anew."

Kavanagh believes one of the positions his old colleague took may have led to his home in Troy being firebombed. That was in August 1975 when a bomb thrown through a window caused minor damage before being extinguished.

That involved a bitter teacher strike in western Wayne County in which Kavanagh rendered an opinion not lauded by the teachers or state Democrats.

A year later, in an interview about his upcoming bid for re-election to the supreme court, Kavanagh told The Eccentric Newspapers, "I told the teachers I didn't like the law, but that it is the law. They seemed to be satisfied, and they endorsed me."

That ruling — and other disagreements with fellow Democrats — was a factor in the party's decision in 1976 not to renominate Kavanagh.

Democrats instead nominated Roman Gribbs, — a move that meant the former Detroit mayor, not Kavanagh, would have the party backing for the nonpartisan judgeship.

Kavanagh circumvented mainline Democrats, winning a spot on the ballot, by filing his own affidavit. He easily won re-election in 1976, but lost a 1984 re-election bid.

"He wasn't a machine Democrat," said Attorney General Frank J. Kelley, who first encountered Kavanagh when their fathers — Frank E. Kelley and John F. Kavanagh — were stalwart Democrats.

"He was a good person, a fine lawyer and great public servant," said Kelley, "and he never lost his compassion for the underdog."

## Cranbrook hosts astronaut

An astronaut who has flown two shuttle missions, including a recent encounter with the Mir Space Station, will speak March 2 at the Cranbrook Institute of Science for the Sunday Brunch Lecture Series.

Subject of Colonel William MacArthur's speech is: Life on Mars.

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bers. Fee includes a buffet lunch.

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MacArthur has orbited the Earth more than 350 times, traveling 9.2 million miles in a total of 22 days. He will discuss NASA's current Mars Pathfinder mission to study the red planet and the amazing technology being used to explore it.



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## Suicides from page A5

seriously.

• Myth — "Suicides run in families." Fact — Suicides are random, and they can happen in any family at any social or economic strata.

Counselors also advised parents and youngsters about telltale signs they say can be indicators of distress that can lead to suicide.

"When somebody starts giving prize possessions away," said Breen. It may be that in their mind they have no more use for them.

If somebody, for example, seems euphoric or happy after a period of depression, said Breen, it can mean they see a solution to their problems ... and that might be suicide.

A crucial part of the message

has been aimed at the youngsters themselves, said Breen.

"We want them to open up about their problems," he said. "We want them to talk about their problems before they become overwhelming."

Often, said Breen, a youngster might confide in a friend that he or she is overwhelmed, or hurting so badly he or she is thinking about suicide.

"We want youngsters to know they are not betraying a confidence by telling somebody," said Breen.

If the person he or she tells doesn't respond, said Breen, the youngster should tell somebody else and, if necessary, somebody else.

"The youngster needs help," he said.

## Hope from A5

front door and find 40-to-50 kids."

"Today, those of us who live in the suburbs live on quarter-acre, two-thirds-acre lots. Houses are further apart. Very often, if our children want to play with their friends we have to make play dates."

Compounding loneliness is extreme pressure. Students start feeling pressure to earn enough academic accolades to win scholarships to "the" best colleges.

"Getting into the right school has become big business in America and parents have bought into that," Syme said. "And as a result, kids are put into a pressure cooker that they didn't ask for."

Evidence suggests those problems won't soon disappear, and that suicides will continue to increase, according to Syme.

But programs such as Reach For Hope might yet chip away at the dilemma. The fact is, the overwhelming number of these kids don't want to die," the rabbi said. "They just want help."



Rabbi Syme

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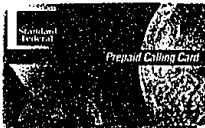
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