

## **Donovan M. “Van” Hamm, Jr.**



Donovan M. “Van” Hamm, Jr., beloved husband of 41 years of Linda **Vettori** Hamm, and prominent Virgin Islands lawyer, died of cancer at age 73 on Saturday, May 25, 2019.

Van received his undergraduate degree from The Johns Hopkins University in 1966 and a juris doctorate from the University of Maryland in 1999, where he served as an Associate Editor of the Maryland Law Review and graduated as a member of the Order of the Coif. He also served honorably in the Army. Before moving to St. Croix in 1992, Van was a managing partner of a 120-attorney Baltimore law firm. He rendered distinguished service as Chairman of the Section Council of the Section of Real Property Planning and Zoning of the Maryland Bar Association and as a member of the Governor's Commission on Condominiums, Cooperatives and Homeowners' Associations. He was one of the original lecturers for the Maryland Institute for Continuing Professional Education of Lawyers, Inc., a lecturer at the Maryland Judicial Institute, and an adjunct professor of law at the University of Baltimore School of Law.

Van was partner in the St. Croix firm of Hamm & Eckard, and before then, Hamm & Barry. He served the legal needs of countless people and businesses with preeminent skill and unwavering devotion.

Van had a towering intellect, and an even bigger heart. He was a true gentleman with impeccable manners—never forced but always natural. Treating people with kindness, consideration and respect was his first and last instinct.

Even in the sometimes-rough and tumble practice of law, Van responded to the occasional acrimony and incivility with the dignity and calm rationality befitting his inner strength. (“If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs ...”) It was simply not in him to stoop to personal attacks, even against “hard ball” lawyers. He never felt the need. His transcendent legal knowledge and skills would carry the day. Such opponents (generally finding themselves on the losing end) soon learned that kindness is not weakness. Van earned the admiration, even affection, of many a lawyer—ally and adversary alike—in this way.

Van was diagnosed with colorectal cancer a decade ago, undergoing an arduous regimen of chemotherapy, only to be later diagnosed with prostate cancer of independent origin, requiring even more chemotherapy. Lightning struck twice. Even when the chemo knocked him off his feet, Van was not one to complain. He did not burden others with his pain or fears. He would instead express gratitude for the doctors caring for him and for the many people caring about him—never pessimism and never self-pity. He remained steadfast, even in the face of a hopeless prognosis in his last few months. (“If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew / To serve your turn long after they are gone, / And so hold on when there is nothing in you / Except the Will which says to them: ‘Hold on!’ ...”).

Van is survived by his wife, Linda; sister Bonnie Hamm; brother William Watt Hamm; and brother-in-law Paul Vettori.

We miss you, Van.