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## A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO THE LATE JUDGE CHARLES W. FLEMING

THE HONORABLE LOUIS STOKES<sup>1</sup>

On July 11, 1994, the Cleveland community mourned the passing of the Honorable Charles W. Fleming, Presiding Judge of the Cleveland Municipal Court. His demise brought to a close a distinguished career which spanned five decades. Judge Fleming led an exemplary life. He was a man who reached the pinnacle of achievement for those of us who have dedicated our lives to pursuing justice and equality for all.

I am pleased that the *Cleveland State Law Review* has chosen to memorialize Judge Fleming by dedicating a special issue in his honor. I join his colleagues, family and friends as we pay tribute to an individual whose career in the law was outstanding.

As I reflect upon the life of Charles W. Fleming, I recall a close friendship that developed between him, my brother, Carl, and myself. This friendship developed from our having grown up together in the same neighborhood. Not only did Charles, my brother, Carl, and I grow up in the same neighborhood, but we also became lawyers at about the same time.

Early in his legal career, Charlie became an Assistant County Prosecutor in the Criminal Division of the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office. He was a very able and persuasive lawyer in the courtroom. Although we tried some tough cases against one another, we remained close friends. But, that is the kind of person Charlie was. He had a special ability to be tough in the courtroom but was personable, friendly and sociable outside of the courtroom.

Charlie and I were also fraternity brothers in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. In fact, I was one of the fraternity members who initiated him. He never forgot it and would always call me his "Brother." Each of us in our own way epitomize what we believe in. In the case of Charlie Fleming, his life epitomized his belief in brotherhood. I recall that he always greeted you with a "Hey Bro," or a gusty, "My Brother." Charlie proved during a lifelong friendship that he was, indeed, "My Brother."

As we pay tribute to Charles W. Fleming, we honor an individual who was special to each of us. Charlie loved his wife, Norma. He was devoted to his family, and he had a special fondness for his friends. Charlie lived by the poem by Sam W. Foss where it says: "*Let me live in my house by the side of the road and be a friend to man.*"

I will miss my friend, Charlie Fleming. I will miss the lawyer who blazed a trail through the legal system. I will miss the judge who championed justice

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and equality. I will miss the humanitarian who cared for his fellow man. I will miss "My Brother."