

Courthouse Named for Kodiak Legal Pioneer

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Sixty-years ago this month, a young Kodiak man, just a few years out of the Navy, graduated from law school. Now, after 22 years as an attorney and prosecutor followed by 15 years as a Superior Court Judge, that young man, now a respected Kodiak elder, will see the courthouse here named in his honor.

After a ceremony Friday evening, Kodiak's court will henceforth be known as the "Roy H. Madsen Justice Center.

"Well, it was something I had no knowledge of whatsoever, until Steve said it was approved and called and told me it that was going to take place. I'm honored, really. I just can't express it in words, I guess. It's hard to believe."

Judge Madsen had returned to Kodiak after the Navy and said he started getting an interest in the law while working as a store clerk.

"I had been in the guiding business with my father — bear guiding. And I fished up in Bristol Bay in the summertime, and in the winters I worked as a clerk in the men's department of O. Kraft and Son, and just out of boredom, I started taking a correspondence course in law through LaSalle University in Chicago."

Current Kodiak Superior Court Judge Steve Cole is one of the folks behind making the renaming happen.

"Most courthouses are named only after Supreme Court Justices, and only after they've passed on."

That makes the Roy H. Madsen Justice Center even more remarkable. Cole said having another former Kodiak judge on the Alaska Supreme Court — which makes such decisions — probably didn't hurt. Judge Joel Bolger was appointed last year.

Cole says there will be a large ceremony and celebration to mark the occasion.

"It's open to the public. We've got a lot of guest speakers from different parts the state coming in. It's not a surprise. It's something we've been working on for probably four to five years and even longer than that, and it's finally come to fruition."

If you're interested in going, just look for the news sign.

"They just put up the sign the other day. It's on the front of the courthouse. It's pretty nice; it's a nice big sign up on top. And there's going to be a plaque put in the building as you walk in."

The event dedicating the Roy H. Madsen Justice Center is at 7 p.m.