

# Judge William Rose

## Fair-minded circuit judge devoted to judicial education



William Rose was a clear-minded, strong and fair judge and an innovative director of studies at the Judicial Studies Board, as well as an author and lecturer. He insisted on sitting in court until a few weeks before his death from cancer.

William Michael Rose was born in 1949, the son of Melville Rose, an architect, and Anita Rose. Although brought up in a traditional Jewish family he did not finally profess any religious belief. He was educated at Haberdashers' Aske's School and took a law degree at Southampton University. He was called to the Bar in 1972. After sitting as an assistant recorder and recorder for six years, he was appointed to the circuit bench in 1998.

Rose had a busy general criminal and civil practice at the Bar. As a junior equally at home in a murder case at the Old Bailey and a property dispute in the

Chancery Division, he enjoyed a career which, in the light of the contemporary trend towards specialism, appeared unusually wideranging.

His interest in legal education began in 1973 when, like many young barristers trying to make ends meet, he lectured part-time. But unlike others, he enjoyed teaching and maintained his enthusiasm. He was engaged with what was then the Inns of Court School of Law, first teaching hands-on practical work, then setting and marking papers before joining the board of examiners in 1990.

After appointment to the Bench he continued to lecture on legal drafting. He lectured extensively to the legal professions and to appreciative judges and professionals across the world on civil procedure and judicial training.

In 2002 Rose was appointed director of studies at the Judicial Studies Board – he was the third of seven holders of that post to date from Wandsworth County Court. He held the post for two years as a senior circuit judge.

Unlike his immediate predecessors he did not have one particular programme of training to carry through and was free to concentrate on the strategy of judicial education and the role of the director of studies. He had clear ideas about the way judicial training should develop, soundly based on his experience as an educator and as a judge and consumer of judicial training.

These views sometimes led to disagreements with colleagues and senior judiciary in which Rose did not shrink from expressing himself with characteristic boldness. His determination

that the JSB should be seen to be professional in its approach made him direct and challenging. Even if his views did not always prevail they stimulated fruitful discussion and earned him the respect of JSB staff and tutor judges, which he greatly valued.

Rose championed judicial education across Europe, especially in those countries where the importance of judicial independence for the health of democracy was being increasingly appreciated. His passion for justice led him to express himself strongly about judicial systems which fell below acceptable standards.

His cancer was diagnosed at the outset of his term of office, but he refused to allow the effects of sustained treatment to prevent him from working full-time and from sitting at Wandsworth County Court when he could make time from his duties at the JSB.

From 2004 Rose was a member of the Parole Board. He was never a soft judge, but it was an experience which nevertheless confirmed his view that resources spent on keeping prisoners inside were far more productively spent on supporting them on the outside.

Rose's book, *Pleadings without Tears*, went into its seventh edition shortly before his death. A practical, readable and unstuffily erudite book, its success as a primer for legal drafting led it to be published in Australia and other countries. From 2000 he was coeditor and then editor-in-chief of *Blackstone's Civil Practice*, a standard work on the civil justice reforms of 1999 which is published annually by the Oxford University Press.

As a criminal judge Rose conducted, among many serious cases, a long fraud trial using the computer technology which he later promoted at the JSB. From 2001 he was the senior judge at Wandsworth County Court, hearing a wide variety of civil and family cases. His reputation was that of a robust and practical judge, underpinned by his expertise in law and procedure. He was always alert to the possibility of a compromise which would save legal costs and reduce bitterness and took pains to ensure that litigants in person got a fair hearing.

Even when his illness was far advanced Rose always had time for his colleagues and took a genuine interest in their wellbeing and that of their families. He was much loved by the staff at Wandsworth, who will not forget his dressing up as Santa for Christmas 2005 and dishing out presents to the most junior staff and senior judge with an equal "Ho-ho-ho" for all.

Privately, Rose could appear gruff at first acquaintance. This was deceptive. In fact, he was immensely convivial, funny and generous, proud of his wine cellar and large collection of brass instruments, all of which he could play, after a fashion, including a huge euphonium which, to his delight, his two stepsons bought him for his birthday.

He was devoted to music all his life and was proficient on clarinet and piano. He loved his powerboat in Spain and held a pilot's licence when he was younger, terrifying the friends who were prepared to go up with him. Expert in digital photography, he was fascinated by all the latest electronic gizmos.

He is survived by his wife, Susan Lawe, whom he married in 2002, and by her two sons.

**His Honour Judge William Rose, circuit judge since 1998 and judicial educationist, was born on July 12, 1949. He died of cancer on May 10, 2007, aged 57**