



## JUDGE JOHN ROLL WAS A HERO: WHY DIDN'T WE KNOW THIS?

January 20, 2011

Federal Judge John Roll was killed in Tucson trying to save another man's life. As soon as madman Jared Lee Loughner finished his attempt to murder Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, he turned his gun on the people to his left, then the people to his right. Recently released video shows his first target to the right was Ron Barber, Gifford's district director, who was standing next to Justice John Roll.

Barber was shot in the arm. Judge Roll then pushed him down and shielding Barber with his own body, steered him to shelter under a nearby table. While under the table, Loughner aimed for Roll's exposed back and pulled the trigger. The video continues as Judge Roll looks up over his right shoulder, lies back down and dies at the scene.

Why don't we know that? We know that an intern to Gifford, Daniel Hernandez, held Congresswoman Gifford's head in his lap, putting pressure on the wound to save her life. We know that retired Army National Guard Colonel Bill Badger, though injured, tackled Loughner. We know Joe Zamudio, a young bystander carrying a gun, ran to the scene initially to stop the shooter by his own deadly force, but aided Badger instead in the restraint. While both held Loughner, Patricia Maisch removed another loaded magazine from Loughner's pocket.

We know the stories of these people well as recounted by the press and by President Obama at the memorial service. We are collectively proud of them and each deserve recognition and praise. But what about Judge Roll?

One could argue that reports of the video were just released. Even so, should this news not be shouted from the rooftops? **Chief Judge of the Ninth Circuit...gives his life for another!** Instead, the headline in the Washington Post read, "**In videos, details of shooting emerge.**" And the dramatic details of the judge's heroism are not reported until two thirds of the way through the article. The heroism of the judge was THE most remarkable information in the story, but the Post didn't bother to headline it.

Did no one know about Judge Roll's actions until this week? Did the man whose life he saved, Ron Barber, know nothing of the judge's selflessness as he left the hospital and headed directly, respectfully to the funeral? Did no one at the scene relay the story? Did investigators not get Barber's account of his own shooting? More than 250 federal agents and 130 local detectives have conducted more than 300 interviews to determine the facts.

Why don't we know these facts? The Tucson shootings are a huge story. Everyday we hear the updates of Congressman Giffords' recovery, but hardly a word of this profound development.

Democratic advisors were brazenly quick to telegraph how the shooting should be managed. They followed an earlier suggestion by Democratic Pollster, Mark Penn, that Obama needs a "similar event" to the Oklahoma City bombing to reconnect with disenfranchised voters. Some actually opined that lucky Bush had his 9/11 and wondered if this could be Obama's moment. Such a tragic crisis should not be wasted, as Rahm Emmanuel has famously said.

Could it be the heroes of this story have been chosen and that Judge Roll doesn't fit the template? Appointed by President George H.W. Bush, could it be that Judge Roll's act of courage was seen to diminish or interfere with the aggrandizement of a Democratic Congresswoman from her tragic

shooting? Could it be that in an attempt to trade on her tragic circumstances, the report of a heroic Republican Judge would be inconvenient?

The killing of a federal judge has never been a small thing. Judges are appointed for life and in many ways, wield more influence and authority than sitting Congressmen. Judge John Roll is only the 4<sup>th</sup> to be killed in America's history. The last was Robert S. Vance of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit who died in 1989 from an explosion of a pipe bomb mailed to his home in Alabama. The FBI, in a status reserved for events like 9/11, deemed it a "major case". A task force called "VanPac" didn't stop until the Georgia man responsible was convicted of murder. The message has always been clear: Don't touch a federal judge.

But Judge John Roll's murder seems more of an aside...a happenstance worth only a mention... and the story now revealed of his personal heroism a great "Ho-Hum."

Judges make difficult decisions that affect us all. If we want them to judge free from wrong influences, they must be protected at all costs. Their killing, purposeful or inadvertent must be treated with great seriousness. Their murder or their heroism must not be ignored nor should the death and heroism of others be exploited for political advantage.

Six people are dead and eighteen more wounded. At last Obama has his crisis, and it appears it shall not be wasted. And that's why the American public may never know about the heroism of Judge John Roll.