Lawyer Philip Corboy dies at 87 in Chicago
Tuesday, June 12, 2012

June 12, 2012 (CHICAGO) (WLS) -- A nationally known lawyer in the realm of personal injury lawsuits has died in Chicago.

Philip Corboy died at age 87 at his home Monday morning with his wife Mary Dempsey at his side, a news release from his law firm said.

Corboy, cofounder of Corboy Demetrio, was a legendary personal injury lawyer and medical malpractice attorney. He is credited with legitimizing personal injury law by taking on the unknown clients and going after the well-known big businesses.

Corboy was one of the attorneys for plaintiffs in the lawsuit filed against McNeil Consumer Products Inc. over the 1982 deaths of Chicago-area people who ingested poisoned Tylenol capsules. A settlement of the case for an undisclosed amount was announced just as jury selection was set to begin in 1991.

Dempsey released a statement Tuesday morning, saying, "Phil was a kind, compassionate, and marvelous lawyer, and a wonderful husband, and I want him to be remembered as someone who cared about people he loved and people he represented."

Corboy has a long list of honors and achievements in Chicago. He served as the president of the Chicago Bar Association from 1972 to 1973. Corboy also served as president of the Illinois Trial Lawyer Association.

Loyola awarded Corboy an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters back in 1996 and in 2009 named its law school Philip H. Corboy Law Center.

Corboy graduated first in his class from Loyola University School of Law and was sworn into the Illinois bar on January 17, 1949, the law firm news release said. He became an assistant corporation counsel for the city of Chicago.

Corboy also spearheaded the first effort to ban smoking in public elevators in Chicago.

According to his law firm, Corboy lost only one case during his entire 50-year career, and the case was reversed on appeal. According to the Corboy & Demetrio website, the firm has won more than $3 billion in settlements over the course of its existence. The firm is now handling the lawsuit by the family of late Chicago Bears lineman Dave Duerson against the NFL following Duerson's suicide last year. The firm also represented victims in the Gold Coast sidewalk crash last year that injured eight people when a city sanitation truck jumped a curb and ran down a group on Pearson Street.
Corboy leaves his behind his wife, his three sons -- Philip Harnett Corboy, Jr. (Peg), John R. Corboy (Alix), and Thomas M. Corboy -- eight grandchildren, his brother and sister-in-law, niece, nephews and his in-laws. Corboy is preceded in death by his only daughter, Judge Joan Marie Corboy, who died at age 45, and his youngest son, Robert J. Corboy, who died at age 12.

"Personal injury trial lawyers are in the rare position of being able to level the playing field to help people in the war against organized money: insurance companies, corporations, healthcare providers, common carriers, manufacturers, cities, states and government," Corboy was quoted by his firm.

In 1998, Corboy became only the second trial lawyer in history to have a street named for him in Chicago, when Washington between Dearborn and Clark in the Loop was named Philip Corboy Way.

A funeral will be held for Corboy Saturday at Holy Name Cathedral.