Judge William Benson Bryant
1911–2005

Compassionate and Fair in Life and Law

Judge William B. Bryant was appointed to the U.S. District Court by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965. He had been one of the most prominent criminal defense attorneys in Washington, D.C., and he became one of its most respected federal judges. A student of the Constitution throughout his life, Judge Bryant was known for his compassion and fairness.

William B. Bryant was born in Mobile, Alabama, on September 18, 1911. Judge Bryant's family moved to Washington less than one year later. After his grandfather had been driven out of Iowa by a lynching mob, Bryant attended Des Moines High School, Howard University, and its law school where he taught trial advocacy for more than 30 years. Although he loved his work, the judge's wife, Alice, and their two children came first, and he often urged his law clerks to leave the office to spend more time with their families.

William B. Bryant was a favorite in the federal courthouse in Washington. From the time he began trying cases in 1939 until his death almost six decades later, Bryant was revered by the judges and attorneys who worked with him. He was known for his fairness and dedication to the law. He often took on cases that others would not, and he always worked hard to ensure that justice was served.

Appointed to the District Court on August 12, 1965, Judge Bryant became the court's first African-American Chief Judge in 1977. Judge Bryant was a role model to young lawyers of all races. He believed that the law could always accommodate a fair result, and he spent countless hours studying cases in search of law that would achieve justice. He was always careful to preserve the dignity of those who appeared before him and was the kind of judge who had the respect of all who appeared before him.

Judge Bryant was a gentle giant who was known for his compassion and fairness. He was respected by judges, lawyers, and politicians alike, and he always worked hard to ensure that justice was served. He was a true American hero, and his legacy will live on for generations to come.

His friends would often visit him at the age of 90 so that he could help them with their work. This optimism drew candid words and encouragement to his fellow judges and lawyers in his chambers, seeking advice about life and law. His words would always be worth the effort to understand the meaning of wisdom and finding good about their prospects and those of mankind.