

Goodbye Mike, Hello Judge: My Journey for Justice  
By The Honorable Myron H. Bright  
Institute for Regional Studies Press, North Dakota State University (2015)

The Honorable Myron Bright has served as a circuit judge on the Eighth Circuit for 46 years. This represents more than one-third of the Court's history since the Eighth Circuit was formally organized under the Judiciary Act of 1891, and more than half of the Court's history since Congress enacted the legislation in 1929 that split the Eighth Circuit to create the Tenth Circuit. There is only one person who has been a circuit judge in the Eighth Circuit nearly as long as Judge Bright—that was Joseph Woodrough of Nebraska who was appointed to the Eighth Circuit in 1933 and remained a member of the court until his death in 1977. But no one else in history has served as long as a circuit judge of the Eighth Circuit as Judge Bright. Not even Judge Woodrough, who took senior status in 1961 and never sat on another case in the 16 years that followed. In contrast, Judge Bright may well have sat on more cases since taking senior status than he did before going on senior status. And after 46 years, he's still working.

Judge Bright recently completed his memoirs, which have been published by North Dakota State University's Institute for Regional Studies Press. These memoirs mirror the author's lively and energetic personality!

All who know Judge Bright know he is a raconteur of the first order. True to form, his memoirs reflect his unique skill as an enchanting storyteller. The book begins with a real-time account of May 8, 1968—the day he met President Lyndon B. Johnson in the White House as a nominee to the Eighth Circuit. The excitement and exhilaration of this scene is captivating. And it offers the perfect jumping-off point for Judge Bright's theme—how did he get there?

He writes of his parents, Jewish immigrants who found their way from Eastern Europe to Minnesota's Iron Range. They worked hard and made a life for their children, including their son Myron who grew up in Eveleth and still considers it his home town. Eveleth was a true melting pot. His schoolmates were also the children of immigrants. They came from many different ethnic backgrounds. He had to deal with anti-Semitism early. But he also learned that everyone had to sink or swim together. He became involved in just about every activity at the local high school, and excelled at most everything. He was an able and gifted student, and he was a natural leader.

Judge Bright went on to the University of Minnesota. But like so many in his generation, his academic work was interrupted by World War II. He served in the U.S. Army for four years, including 19 months in the Asia-Pacific Theatre. His book includes several anecdotes from his time in the military, where he seems to have learned more about justice than he had at the Minnesota Law School. After the War, he completed his degree, serendipitously ended up marrying the love of his life, Fritzie, and landed a job with the Vogel Law Firm in Fargo which turned out to be the perfect place for him.

His memoirs are full of wonderful stories from his 21 years of law practice as a trial and appellate lawyer in North Dakota. During this time, he and Fritzie were also active in Democratic politics and became close friends of Senator Quentin Burdick and Governor William L. Guy. He also formed great friendships with John and Robert Kennedy as well as many others. The book provides a true insider's account of local and national politics.

He was having so much fun that he wanted to keep on trying cases and stay active in politics. But Fritzie told him that she would rather have a live husband than a dead trial lawyer! That got Judge Bright's attention. When then-Chief Judge Charles Vogel of the Eighth Circuit announced his intention to take senior status, Judge Bright decided to go for the appointment.

He was nominated to the Eighth Circuit by President Johnson and received his commission in 1968. And, as they say, the rest is history. According to the book jacket, he has now served as a judge on more than 6500 cases and is the longest-serving federal appeals judge in the United States. Judge Bright's book includes stories about several of the cases he has worked on and decided. Each involves a profound lesson about how the law—and the judges who apply the law—must strive to achieve real justice.

This is a wonderful book by a wonderful judge who is a wonderful friend of everyone in the Eighth Circuit.

Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has remarked: "The Honorable Myron H. Bright is truly a man never at a loss. His bright mind, good humor, and caring heart have made him a great jurist and teacher, one who constantly strives to make things better for all the people law exists to serve." Professor Ronald Carlson, one of the country's leading evidence scholars, describes Judge Bright as an "American legal legend [who] has inspired

generations of lawyers. His example of industry, dedication, and fairness is a model for jurists, attorneys and public servants everywhere. To have the exciting story of his life in this book is a treasure.”

And the distinguished attorney, E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr., observes that Judge Bright has always acted and spoken with “such clarity and truthfulness that he has struck his many friends as a unique Saint of Clarity-Truth.”

This is a great book that is a must-read for any lawyer in the Eighth Circuit. In addition to the NDSU’s Institute for Regional Studies Press, Judge Bright’s book is also available online from Barnes & Noble for the price of \$24 plus sales tax plus \$4 shipping. If purchased in a Barnes & Noble, the price will be \$30, plus sales tax.

Reviewed by Thomas H. Boyd, Winthrop & Weinstine, P.A.