Myron H. Bright was born on March 5, 1919, in Eveleth, Minnesota. His parents, Morris and Lena, were Jewish immigrants from Russia. He grew up in the Iron Range of northeastern Minnesota during the Great Depression, and later said that growing up in a mining community among first-generation Americans taught him about tolerance and the issues faced by working people.

Judge Bright attended elementary and high school in Gilbert and Eveleth, and he received his B.S.L. from the University of Minnesota in 1941. After serving as a U.S. Army Air Corps Captain during the war, he attended law school there. He met Frances Louise Reisler, known as “Fritzie,” at the University, and they were married in 1946. They would have two children, Dinah Ann and Joshua Robert.

Following admission to the North Dakota Bar in 1947, Bright moved to Fargo, where he went into private practice at the firm of Wattam, Vogel and Vogel (later Wattam, Vogel, Vogel, Bright and Peterson). He engaged in general practice with a heavy emphasis on litigation, and would remain there until 1968.
In 1965, Fritzie Bright suggested to her husband that he ask his friend Sen. Quentin N. Burdick of North Dakota to keep him in mind for the next judgeship that became available. Burdick did, and on April 25, 1968, Bright was nominated by Lyndon B. Johnson to a seat on the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. He was the first Jewish member of the Eighth Circuit. The seat had been vacated by Charles J. Vogel, the brother of Bright’s partners in the firm. Senior Judge Vogel had adjoining chambers with Bright, and he advised him in his early years on the court.

Judge Bright has written noteworthy rulings in environmental law, employment discrimination law, criminal law, and evidence. His thorough and well-reasoned opinions reflect his genuine concern for people and the rule of law, as well as his dissatisfaction with the federal sentencing guidelines.


Judge Bright took senior status in 1985, but has remained extremely active. In addition to handling a reduced caseload in the Eighth Circuit, Judge Bright has pursued many other professional activities, including sitting by designation on federal appellate panels and district courts in other circuits and teaching courses in trial and appellate practice at St. Louis University, where he has served as Distinguished Professor of Law.

E. Thomas Sullivan said that “Judge Bright was an early pioneer, if not the originator, of the highly acclaimed Jurists-in-Residence program in American law schools.” These programs bring distinguished judges to law schools and allow them to share their experience and ideas with the legal community. Judge Bright was a Jurist-in-Residence at several schools, including the University of Hawaii and the University of North Dakota, and has lectured at most law schools in the Midwest. In 2007, under the sponsorship of the U.S. State Department, he traveled to the Middle East to exchange views about judicial education with representatives of international courts.

In 2009, Myron H. Bright reached an historic milestone by becoming the longest-serving working judge on the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. During his remarkable 41 years of service, he has heard over 6,000 cases, had over 100 law clerks, and worked with 35 of the 58 judges who have served on that Circuit’s Court of Appeals.

He has distinguished himself with a personality befitting his name. Ever dynamic and full of life, he brightens a room upon entrance. He has been described as brilliant, warm, and charming, with a great sense of humor, by all who know him. Lana Schultz, his executive assistant of many years, has written that he has taught her to “laugh at yourself; live each day joyfully; listen with your heart; labor hard . . . then harder, and remain loyal to an extended family and to the law.”

1 83 Minn. L. Rev. 219 (Dec. 1998).
2 Judge Joseph W. Woodrough served on the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals for 44 years from 1933 to 1977, but he stopped hearing cases when he took senior status in 1961, working as a circuit judge for a total of “only” 28 years.
3 83 Minn. L. Rev. 304 (Dec. 1998).
Awards & Honors

• Judge Myron H. Bright Endowment at the University of North Dakota Law School, set up by Judge Bright’s former law clerks. The endowment provides funds for moot court team expenses at national competitions, 1993

• Francis Rawle Award presented by ALI-ABA Committee on Continuing Professional Education, for Outstanding Achievement in Post-Admission Legal Education, 1997

• Lifetime Achievement Award, University of North Dakota School of Law, for his outreach efforts in education of the legal profession, 1998

• Herbert Harley Award from the American Judicature Society, for Promoting Effective Administration of Justice, 2000

• Distinguished Alumni Award, Minnesota Law Review, 2007

• Certificates of Appreciation from the Institute of Advanced Legal and Judicial Studies, United Arab Emirates, Dubai, and the University of Sharjah College of Law, in recognition of his valuable participation in the seminar “The Constitutional Rights of the Criminal Defender,” 2007

• Honorary Doctorate, North Dakota State University, in recognition of a career that has gained a high level of distinction in the judicial profession, and for exemplary contributions as a respected community leader, 2008

• Liberty Bell Award, State Bar Association of North Dakota, for promoting understanding, respect, and citizens’ obligations to the law, the courts, and the government, 2008

• Judge Myron H. Bright Scholarship endowed by his former law clerks at University of Minnesota Law School, for tuition assistance of a student with academic promise, 2008

• Certificate of Appreciation in Washington, D.C., from the United States Department of State, congratulating him on his 40th anniversary as a federal judge and thanking him for his long-term, unwavering support of Department of State rule of law-related public diplomacy programs, 2008