

JUDGE MYRON H. BRIGHT



The Eighth Circuit's Longest-Working Judge

EARLY YEARS & CAREER

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 and had two children, Dinah Ann and Joshua Robert.

Graduation portrait, Eveleth Junior College, 1939.



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 remained there until 1968.



Above left: The young Myron H. Bright.



Above right: Playing football at Eveleth Junior College, 1937.



Right: In Air Corps uniform during World War II.



During his years at Wattam, Vogel, Vogel, Bright and Peterson, ca. 1965.

FEDERAL JUDGESHIP

Confirmation hearing, May 1968. From left: Fritzie Bright, Myron Bright, Senator Quentin N. Burdick, President Lyndon B. Johnson.



Judge Bright taking oath, Aug. 16, 1968. From left: Bright, Circuit Judge Charles J. Vogel, District of North Dakota Judge George S. Register, then-Circuit Judge Harry A. Blackmun, District of Minnesota Judge Edward J. Devitt.



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 likely 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 advised him in his early years on the Court.

Judge Bright wrote 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.

His distinguished career extended beyond the courtroom. He served on the Judicial Conference committees for Administration of the Probation System, 1977-1983; Advisory Committee on Appellate Rules, 1989-1990; and International Judicial Relations, 1996-2003. He was a member of the American Bar Association, Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, Cass County Bar Association, North Dakota State Bar Association, Federal Judges Association, and American Judicature Society.

8th Circuit Judges, 1982. Standing left to right: Richard S. Arnold, J. Smith Henley, Theodore McMillian, John R. Gibson. Sitting left to right: Donald R. Ross, Gerald W. Heaney, Chief Judge Donald P. Lay, Myron H. Bright, Roy L. Stephenson.



He authored numerous publications, including several editions of *Objections at Trial* (most with Ronald L. Carlson and Edward J. Imwinkelried) and the classic articles "The Ten Commandments of Oral Argument"¹ and "Appellate Briefwriting: Some 'Golden' Rules."² In 2015, his autobiography *Goodbye Mike, Hello Judge* was published by the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies Press.



8th Circuit Judges with Justice Blackmun, 1990. Standing left to right: Pasco M. Bowman, Frank J. Magill, Roger L. Wollman, George G. Fagg, John R. Gibson, Richard S. Arnold, C. Arlen Beam, J. Smith Henley. Sitting left to right: Theodore McMillian, Donald R. Ross, Myron H. Bright, Justice Harry A. Blackmun, Chief Judge Donald P. Lay, William H. Webster, Floyd R. Gibson, and Gerald W. Heaney.

¹ 67 A.B.A.J. 1136 (1981).

² 17 Creighton L. Rev. 1069 (1984).

THE COURTROOM & BEYOND



Judge Bright took senior status in 1985, but remained extremely active. In addition to handling a reduced caseload in the Eighth Circuit, he pursued many other professional activities, including sitting by designation on federal appellate panels and district courts in other circuits and teaching trial and appellate practice at Saint Louis University, where he 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.”¹ 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 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.

Right: At the Institute of Training and Judicial Studies in Abu Dhabi, Sept. 23, 2007. Pictured with United Arab Emirates and U.S. court educators and officials.



In April 2009, Judge Bright reached an historic milestone by becoming the longest-serving working judge on the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, with 40 years and 8 months of service.² He continued to serve

for another 7 years and 5 months. After 48 years judicial service, Judge Bright heard his last case, via remote access, at the age of 97, on September 23, 2016, just three months before his death on December 12.



Left: Judge Bright greeting a University of Hawaii student, with Justice Ginsburg, February 1998.

Judge Bright distinguished himself with a personality befitting his name. Ever dynamic and full of life, he brightened a room upon entrance. He has been described as brilliant, warm, and charming, and with a great sense of humor. Lana Schultz, his executive assistant of many years, wrote that he 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.”³

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).

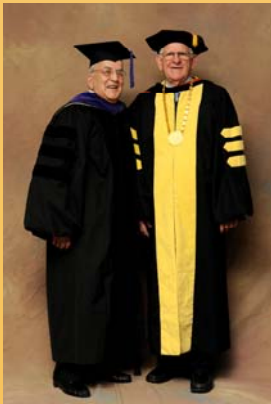
Judge Bright with staff at his 40th Anniversary celebration, Sept. 4, 2008. From left: Margaret Ryznar (law clerk), Cherie Mastel (judicial assistant), Bright, Lana Schultz (judicial assistant), Alex Hontos (law clerk).



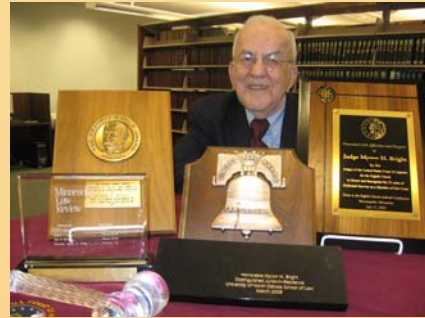
20th Anniversary Reunion of Judge Bright's law clerks and staff, August 1988.

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



Receiving his honorary doctorate from North Dakota State University, May 2008. Left: Pictured with NDSU President Joseph Chapman.



Above: Judge Bright with his awards. Below: At a medals ceremony honoring Judge Bright and Fritzie Bright's WWII service, Sept. 8, 1995. From left: Judge Bright; Sen. Kent Conrad of North Dakota; and Bright's grandchildren, Adam Schultz, Sarianne Schultz, and Amy Long.

- 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, U.S. Department of State, on his 40th anniversary as a federal judge, for his long-term, unwavering support of Department of State rule of law-related public diplomacy programs, 2008
- Community Service Green & Golden Globe Award, from the North Dakota State University and Global Outreach Department, 2010
- American Inns of Court Professionalism Award, 2012
- Robert Feder Humanitarian Award, Temple Beth El, 2012
- Award of Appreciation, Saint Louis University School of Law, for his years as a Distinguished Professor of Law and his inauguration of their Jurist-in-Residence program, 2013