

April 2009

In Memory of Justice Joseph P. Albright

Larry V. Starcher

larry.starcher@mail.wvu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/wvlr>



Part of the [Legal Biography Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Larry V. Starcher, *In Memory of Justice Joseph P. Albright*, 111 W. Va. L. Rev. (2009).

Available at: <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/wvlr/vol111/iss3/5>

This Prefatory Matter is brought to you for free and open access by the WVU College of Law at The Research Repository @ WVU. It has been accepted for inclusion in West Virginia Law Review by an authorized editor of The Research Repository @ WVU. For more information, please contact ian.harmon@mail.wvu.edu.

WEST VIRGINIA LAW REVIEW

IN MEMORY OF JUSTICE JOSEPH P. ALBRIGHT

On March 20, 2009 the State of West Virginia lost one of her “very best,” the Honorable Joseph P. Albright.

After serving in public positions ranging from Assistant Prosecutor and City Attorney, to Speaker of the House of Delegates and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia, Joe Albright was taken from us through illness—but not without a determined fight to return to his elected office.

No one had a greater love for the law than Joseph Albright. As Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, and later when Joe stood tall before the entire House of Delegates in assembly, directing the activities of that body, or even later when Joe participated in the shared decision making of the Supreme Court, he found deep meaning and satisfaction in working with the law.

But the law was not the only love in Joe Albright’s life. He also loved family, his many friends in the legal community, and the University of Notre Dame.

Joseph P. Albright earned his bachelor of business administration, *cum laude*, from the University of Notre Dame, and his law degree from the Notre Dame College of Law. He was a member of the *Notre Dame Law Review*, won the Webber Prize for Appellate Advocacy, and was a member of the moot court team that went to the final rounds in New York City. And his most prized annual piece of mail was the parcel that contained his season tickets to Notre Dame football games.

Along with his fierce allegiance to his alma mater, Joe Albright was a great supporter of West Virginia University, and particularly of the WVU College of law. This support was made visible when serving in both the State Legislature and on our State’s highest court. The WVU College of Law posthumously awarded Justice Albright its 2009 *Justitia Officium Award*, the highest honor the College of Law can bestow upon an individual.

Whether Joe Albright was transacting business with another lawyer on the street, or going toe-to-toe in a courtroom before a jury, he was always a gentleman. He could be appropriately aggressive, but he never mistreated or took unfair advantage of anyone. As a Justice he was courteous to all who appeared before him, although he did not hesitate to challenge a lawyer for a better legal argument than the one being presented.

Joe practiced law in Parkersburg from 1962 until 1995, when Governor Gaston Caperton appointed him to fill an unexpired term on the Supreme Court of Appeals, where he served through December 1996. He returned to the practice of law until he was elected to the high court for a twelve-year term in 2000. He served as the Chief Justice in 2005.

Joe was a native of Wood County, West Virginia, and it was there that he married his high school sweetheart, Patricia A. Deem. Together, Joe and Patty had four children. Sadly, they lost their youngest son to illness when he was seventeen years old, and a few years later, Joe lost Patty to the same disease.

Some years later Joe married Nancie Gensert Divvens, and “inherited” her three daughters and their families. Together, this Brady Bunch combination family enjoyed the pleasures of family life.

Our lives are really just a series of stories of what occurs in the span of our lifetime. But it is through stories that one continues to live. Stories can, and will be, told about Justice Joseph Albright for many years. My story of Joe Albright is simple. Working with Joseph Albright provided the most rewarding times of my professional life. He was a scholar. He loved the law. He believed that the constitution was for the protection of everyone. He was my colleague and friend. I miss him.

*Senior Status Justice Larry V. Starcher