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United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Court of Appeals Mourns Loss of Senior Circuit Judge Joseph T. Sneed

SAN FRANCISCO – Senior Circuit Judge Joseph T. Sneed, III, a respected member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit for nearly 35 years, died February 9 at his residence in San Francisco after an illness. He was 87.

Nominated by President Nixon, Judge Sneed received his judicial commission on August 24, 1973. He served as an active judge of the court until taking senior status on July 21, 1987. He continued to hear cases and serve the court in other capacities for many more years. At the time of his death, he was the fourth most senior judge on the court.

Over his long career, Judge Sneed served on hundreds of appellate panels considering all aspects of the law and is remembered both for important opinions and noteworthy dissents. He also served in advisory roles to the Ninth Circuit, Federal Judicial Center, American Judicature Society and American Bar Association.

Before coming onto the federal bench, Judge Sneed served in the U.S. Department of Justice as the deputy attorney general in 1973. However, much of his career prior to that was spent in the classrooms of some of the nation's top law schools. He was the dean of the Duke University School of Law, 1971 to 1973, and a law professor at Stanford Law School, 1962 to 1971, and Cornell Law School, 1957 to 1962.

Two of Judge Sneed's colleagues on the Ninth Circuit bench, Judges Pamela Ann Rymer and Raymond C. Fisher, both studied tax law under him at Stanford.

Judge Sneed also spent 10 years on the faculty of his law school alma mater, the University of Texas School of Law, where he received his LL.B. with Order of the Coif in 1947. He was offered a job as an assistant professor upon graduation, became an associate professor in 1951 and was made a full professor in 1954. The law school subsequently established an endowed scholarship in his name.

In addition to his law degree, Judge Sneed received a S.J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1958. He earned his undergrad degree from Southwestern University in 1941 and served as a staff sergeant in the Army Air Corps during World War II.

Born in Calvert, Texas, Judge Sneed spent his youth working summers as a cowboy on his uncle's ranch in the Texas panhandle. It was an experience he cherished and loved to share with colleagues and chambers staff.

Judge Sneed is survived by two daughters Clara Sneed and Carly Fiorina, a son, Joseph T. Sneed IV, and two grandsons, Sam Tyree Berzon and Joseph T. Sneed V. He was preceded in death by his wife, Madelon.

A memorial service will be held Friday, February 15, 2008, at 11:00 a.m. at St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church, 2325 Union Street (at Steiner), San Francisco. A reception will follow.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals hears appeals of cases decided by federal trial courts in nine western states and two Pacific Island jurisdictions. The court regularly hears cases in San Francisco, Pasadena, Portland and Seattle, and also travels periodically to other cities within the circuit to hold court.

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