



NEWS RELEASE

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Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Mourns Loss of Chief Judge Emeritus Procter R. Hug, Jr.

SAN FRANCISCO – Judges of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals are mourning the passing of Chief Judge Emeritus Procter R. Hug, Jr., who passed away last week at the age of 88. His death came less than four months after that of his wife, Barbara, to whom he was married for 65 years.

Judge Hug – Proc to his friends and colleagues – was appointed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals by President Jimmy Carter in 1977. He served as chief judge from 1996 - 2000, and assumed senior status in 2002, retiring from the bench in 2017. A beloved son of the state of Nevada, he sat on more than 7000 appellate panels and authored more than 600 opinions during his tenure on the bench.

Judge Hug was known and respected throughout the circuit and the nation for his staunch advocacy on behalf of the federal judiciary. The tributes that have poured in at seminal moments in Judge Hug’s career, and now at his passing, are testament to the tremendous esteem in which he was held.

“Proc was the kind of person, and the kind of leader, who made everyone around him better,” said Ninth Circuit Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas. “His warmth, optimism, vision, intelligence, eloquence, quiet perseverance, and sense of humor made him one of the most effective chief judges that we have known – and he is in very competitive company.”

Ninth Circuit Judge Mary Schroeder, who succeeded Judge Hug as chief judge, said that he embodied dignity and elegance. “Judge Hug didn’t let anything faze him,” she said. “It was part of his bearing.” She noted what so many others have observed regarding his extraordinary effectiveness as chief judge, fighting diligently for judicial independence, and initiating advances in the areas of wellness and civics education, among others.

Judge Schroeder also commented about his optimistic outlook on humanity. "He always believed that people were fundamentally good," she noted. "He didn't want a lot of rules because he thought that people had a good moral compass and wouldn't violate (basic codes of conduct)."

Judge Hug's son, Procter J. Hug – himself an accomplished attorney in Reno – remembers his dad as "a wonderful mentor and father who epitomized optimism, patience, kindness, and humility. He was the best role model and teacher a son could have. Dad touched many people during his exceptional life, none more deeply than his family. He was good and decent to the core, the finest man I have ever known."

Ninth Circuit Court Judge Carlos Bea's memory of Judge Hug dates back several decades. "Proc was in my class at Stanford," Judge Bea recalled. "He was liked by all for his sunny disposition and respected for his great talents. This didn't change when he reached the court. He truly believed in the value of collegiality."

Ninth Circuit Judge Michael Hawkins observed: "Procter Hug was, first and foremost, a perfect gentleman — kind to everyone he encountered, whatever their station in life. He went out of his way in his dealings with circuit staff, whose names and the names of their children he remembered. He was a great role model for young judges, always gracious and accommodating."

In a direct tribute to Judge Hug in 2002, his lifelong friend Ninth Circuit Judge Melvin Brunetti said, "what has stayed with me through all these years and what I have seen in you as a person, a lawyer, and a judge is your compassion for others and your desire, as it is popular to say today, to include everyone and to leave no one behind."

Judge Hug's superb reputation was well known throughout Nevada, where he had served as deputy state attorney general and general counsel for the University of Nevada System before joining the court. The state's former U.S. Senator, Harry Reid, paid tribute to him in 2002, as recorded in the Nevada Law Journal.

"Chief Judge Hug is liked for his courteous and direct manner in questioning attorneys during oral argument," Senator Reid said. "He always asked his questions with a smile on his face, and was kind to all counsel, irrespective of his view regarding the disposition, or merits, of their cases. But above all, Chief Judge Hug should be recognized as the most effective advocate and defender that the Ninth Circuit has known in Washington."

Senator Reid also had a personal reason to appreciate Judge Hug's qualities: two of his sons served as the judge's law clerks. "For me, one very telling example of Judge Hug's impressive personal

qualities and character is the love and esteem that his current and former law clerks have for him," Senator Reid noted.

Among those law clerks was District Judge James Donato of the Northern District of California. "I learned from him what equal justice under law truly means," said Judge Donato. "He gave every case we worked on a careful and dispassionate review, and followed the law free of bias or presumptions about the 'right' result. He had a wonderful ability to defuse stress and tension with a funny observation or story. I remember many occasions when he brought conflicts among less restrained colleagues to harmony and consensus through his charisma and good leadership."

Equally well appreciated by all who knew them was the partnership between Judge Hug and his wife, Barbara. Their marriage was not only remarkably long, but also served as a model for others. "They were an example to all of us of how people should behave as a couple," Judge Schroeder said. Ninth Circuit Judge Michael Daly Hawkins noted that "If there is an afterlife, Proc and Barbara are together there, making sure everyone is kind to one another."

As Chief Judge Thomas said in a tribute to the couple on Judge Hug's assumption of senior status, "Proc and Barbara were the people we all hope to be, and, in a greater sense, what we hope America is. They were not only among the best of their generation, but among the best of any generation."

Prior to his work with the Nevada Attorney General's office and the University of Nevada, Judge Hug made a name for himself as a successful litigator in private practice. Previously he served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy in the 1950s. His very early years were also noteworthy: he was named Outstanding Boy at Sparks High School (while his wife – his high school sweetheart – was named Outstanding Girl a year later). As Ninth Circuit Judge Barry Silverman said in a tribute to Judge Hug a few years ago, "there were sparks at Sparks." He was student body president his senior year, a star hurdler, and a debate champion. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Nevada and his law degree from Stanford Law School.

In addition to his son, Judge Hug is survived by his daughters, Cheryl Hug English and Elyse Hug Pasha, and eight grandchildren. A funeral mass will be held Saturday, November 2nd at 11 a.m. at Our Lady of the Snows parish in Reno, Nevada, with a Celebration of Life to follow. Online condolences may be shared at the judge's Book of Memories at www.waltonsfuneralhomes.com.

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