



Judge Griffin B. Bell

CITIZEN OF THE WORLD AND MERCER ICON

Last December, Mercer's Board of Trustees appointed Judge Griffin B. Bell as only the sixth lifetime trustee in the University's 175-year history. It was a most fitting honor for the highly decorated Mercer graduate. A great American statesman, Judge Bell shaped the development of the South and influenced the entire course of the nation's history. Embodying

the highest and best instincts of the American character, he has been a prominent voice in most of the political, economic and social changes that have molded the character of a new South and the nation for more than 60 years. He has been an adviser to presidents, foreign governments, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense and numerous Fortune 500 companies.

Even though he achieved national, and even international, recognition as an American political and legal leader, Judge Bell has faithfully maintained his loyalty and love toward his alma mater, Mercer University. Since obtaining his LLB degree from Mercer Law School in 1948, Judge Bell has been not only an ardent supporter and friend of the University, but has demonstrated time and time again a passionate concern for the well-being of the institution and a strong commitment to strengthening higher education. He is a Mercer icon.

Since Mercer was founded in 1833, arguably no trustee has impacted more the transition of Mercer into one of the leading private universities in the South. While serving six terms as a trustee — including four years as board chair from 1992-1995 — Judge Bell played a major role in the development and strengthening of Mercer’s 11 schools and colleges. He has served as general chairman of Mercer’s two most successful fund-raising campaigns, which collectively raised more than \$500 million for the University.

“Throughout Mercer’s long and distinguished history, the University has been blessed with great leaders and men and women of influence who have shaped,

guided and nurtured this remarkable institution,” said President William D. Underwood. “I believe Judge Griffin Bell stands out among many great Mercerians in that regard. He loves this University, and that passion has helped make Mercer what it is

today, one of the finest private universities in the Southeast. All who cherish Mercer and what it represents owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to this loyal son of Mercer University.”

In 1999, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges recognized Judge Bell nationally by awarding him the Distinguished Service Award in Trusteeship. In support of his nomination for this honor, letters of support

were submitted by former President Jimmy Carter, former President George H. W. Bush, former Attorney General Janet Reno, former U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn, and former Mercer President R. Kirby Godsey.

As a Life Trustee, Judge Bell joins five other notable Mercerians who have received this honor: current Life Trustee Remer Crum, and the late Gerald Saunders, Frank Jordan, William A. “Gus” Bootle and Tom Watson Brown.



GRIFFIN B. BELL TIMELINE

1948

Graduated *cum laude* from Mercer’s Walter F. George School of Law with an LLB degree

1960

Named co-chairman of John F. Kennedy’s Georgia campaign for the presidency

1961

President Kennedy appointed Bell as a Justice of the United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. Served as director of the Federal Judicial Center



1977

On Jan. 26, sworn in as 72nd Attorney General of the United States following his nomination by President Jimmy Carter



1959

While a senior partner with King & Spalding, appointed chief of staff by Gov. Ernest Vandiver and credited with conceiving the creation of the General Assembly Commission on Schools, which ultimately recommended that the public school system be preserved at all costs rather than close in the face of court-ordered desegregation

1965

Appointed co-chairman of the Atlanta Commission on Crime and Delinquency

1967

First elected to the Mercer Board of Trustees

1976

Returned to practice of law at King & Spalding

1980

Asked by President Carter to serve as head of the American delegation to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe



Judge Bell, while widely recognized for his intellect and wisdom, is also known for his quick wit and affinity for good fellowship, as evidenced by these anecdotes contributed by friends and colleagues.

■ Judge Bell's main hobbies have always been bird hunting and golf. His law partner, Bob Steed, says that the judge abides by the principle that "no client or potential client should ever have to shoot birds or play golf alone."

■ When it comes to golf, Judge Bell's favorite event is the annual springtime "Judicial Invitational," a rag-tag group of lawyers and judges who have played two-day matches for the last 38 years. Judge Bell has never missed a tournament — even arranging his schedule as attorney general to be present. Judge Bell, on numerous occasions, won the Judge's Trophy and the Senior Division Trophy. In fact, this tournament is known for having about as many trophies in various divisions and flights as there are participants.

■ Despite all of his accomplishments, Judge Bell rarely passes up the opportunity to engage in a little self-deprecation. He tells the story of a Carter White House staff reunion several years ago where a guest approached him and proceeded to praise him for all he had done during the Carter years. Judge Bell was very pleased and thanked the person, who then said, "And I hope with all my heart that you will be reappointed, Chairman Greenspan."

■ He also is known for his sometimes-impenetrable South Georgia accent. A former Department of Justice staffer tells the story of a conversation Judge Bell had with Zoë Baird, the unsuccessful attorney general nominee under President Clinton. While exchanging pleasantries, Judge Bell was telling her that he had been quail hunting that weekend. Being from Seattle and living in Connecticut, she thought Judge Bell said "whale hunting." She asked, somewhat surprised, "Did you get any?" Judge Bell replied, "Sure, got 50 of them." "What did you do with them?" she asked. "We ate them," he said.

■ In 1960, Judge Bell was one of the chairs of Georgians for John F. Kennedy for President. He went to Washington to meet Kennedy, and displayed the self-confidence that is so characteristic of him. Kennedy asked Judge Bell if it bothered him as a Baptist to be campaigning

for a Catholic. "No," Judge Bell replied, "but it bothers me that you had to ask."

■ While serving as attorney general, Judge Bell was traveling with a reporter who was quizzing him on his ambitious agenda for the Department of Justice. "How can you accomplish such an ambitious agenda?" the reporter asked him. "It will take an enormous amount of time." Judge Bell snapped back, "I work fast." The reporter responded: "Don't you worry that you will make mistakes working fast?" To which Judge Bell replied, "I don't recommend working fast for a dumb person."

■ In the late 1970s, federal agents discovered and seized two Russian spies while Judge Bell was serving as attorney general. In response, Moscow seized an International Harvester salesman in Russia on business and tried to arrange a swap. When this swap was proposed to Judge Bell by a Soviet delegation, he answered, "I'm not trading a tractor salesman for two Russian spies."

The Mercerian is deeply indebted to Mercer alumni, current trustees and longtime King & Spalding partners Bob Steed and Doc Schneider, as well as Mercer alum and former trustee David Hudson — a former law clerk to Judge Bell — for contributing material for this tribute.

1981

Served as co-chairman of the Attorney General's National Task Force on Violent Crime

1983

Became the first person in the history of Mercer to hold the Distinguished University Professor title

1985

Elected President of the American College of Trial Lawyers

1986

The Griffin Boyette Bell Chair of Law is established at the Walter F. George School of Law

1989

Appointed by President George H. W. Bush as vice chairman of the President's Commission on Federal Ethics Law Reform



1982

William Morrow and Company published Judge Bell's political memoir, *Taking Care of the Law*

1984

Received the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation Award for excellence in law

1988

Became director of the National Science Center Foundation; elected president of the Walter F. George Foundation

1991

Elected Chairman of the Mercer University Board of Trustees

1992

The Annual Griffin Bell Quail Hunt founded by friends in Americus and Sumter County



1999

Awarded the Distinguished Service Award in Trusteeship by the Association of Governing Boards and Universities; Judge Bell's biography, *Uncommon Sense*, written by friend and fellow Mercerian Reg Murphy

2004

The \$40 million University Center opens on the Macon campus, and the facility's board room — where trustee meetings are held twice annually — is named in honor of Judge Bell

2008

Named recipient of the 11-Alive Community Service Award as the Spirit of Atlanta; nominated by former Ambassador Young for his role in the desegregation of schools in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals

1995

Received the Georgia Freedom Award from the Georgia Public Policy Foundation

2000

Mercer Board of Trustees voted to establish the Griffin B. Bell Award for Community Service, to be presented annually to deserving graduating students from among Mercer's 11 schools and colleges

2007

Mercer Board of Trustees elected Judge Bell as only the University's sixth Life Trustee



Robert L. Steed, Judge Griffin B. Bell and Richard A. "Doc" Schneider, in addition to having served together on the Mercer University Board of Trustees, also have practiced law together for many years at King & Spalding in Atlanta.

Judge Bell holds court with fellow trustees, who all happen to be lawyers, prior to a recent Mercer Board meeting. Seated, left to right, are the Honorable Hugh Thompson, justice on the Supreme Court of Georgia; William D. Underwood, Mercer president; Judge Bell; David Hudson, partner, Hull, Towill, Norman, Barrett & Salley; the Honorable Louis Sands, chief judge, U.S. District Court, Middle District of Georgia; and Tommy Malone, the Malone Law Firm.

