



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona Supreme Court - Administrative Office of the Courts

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JUDICIARY MOURNS PASSING OF JUSTICE MICHAEL D. RYAN

It is with great sorrow that the Arizona Judicial Branch announces the passing of Justice Michael D. Ryan (Ret.) late today. He was 66. His friends, family, and colleagues are shocked and saddened by the sudden loss.

Justice Ryan retired from the Arizona Supreme Court in August of 2010, after serving as a Judge in Arizona for more than 24 years.

“Mike was a statesman and dedicated his entire life to public service,” stated Chief Justice Rebecca Berch. “He was a wonderful friend and colleague who will truly be missed. His kind, soft-spoken demeanor masked a brilliant jurist and the consummate gentleman who could always make me smile with his sharp wit. It is difficult to put into words the loss we all feel today.”

Justice Ryan was appointed to the Supreme Court in May 2002 by Governor Jane Hull. Before his appointment to the Supreme Court, he served on the Arizona Court of Appeals, Division One for more than five years, and as a Judge of the Arizona Superior Court in Maricopa County for more than ten years.

As a trial judge, Justice Ryan presided over a number of high-profile cases on the Maricopa County Superior Court, including AzScam, the Phoenix Suns’ drug case and the 1988, and the criminal trial of Governor Evan Mecham, the first criminal trial in Arizona with "gavel to gavel" television and radio coverage. Prior to becoming a judge, Justice Ryan was Deputy County Attorney in the Maricopa County Attorney’s Office, where he served in the major felony bureau and the office’s sex crimes unit.

Justice Ryan received his B.A. degree from St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota in 1967. After college he served in the United States Marine Corps as an infantry platoon commander from 1967 – 1969. He received a medical retirement because of wounds received in combat in Vietnam, and was awarded two Purple Hearts, and a Bronze Star with a Combat "V" for heroism in combat. Justice Ryan came to Arizona in 1970 and later obtained his Juris Doctorate degree from Arizona State University Law School in 1977.

In retirement, Justice Ryan continued to serve Arizona. He was appointed by the Chief Justice as chair of the Arizona Supreme Court’s Arizona Regulation Committee and the Attorney Discipline Probable Cause Committee. Throughout his career, Justice Ryan served on numerous charitable and professional boards. From 1974 through 2000, Justice Ryan and his wife cared for more than 80 high risk infants prior to their placement for adoption or return to their birth parent or parents.

Justice Ryan is survived by his wife Karen, three sons, and two grandchildren.