

Judge Selya Dies at 90 - First Jewish Appointee to Federal Bench in RI

Sunday, February 23, 2025

GoLocalProv News Team

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Providence native Judge Bruce M. Selya passed away on February 23, 2025, at the age of 90.

He was the first individual of Jewish faith to ascend the federal bench in Rhode Island.

Born on May 27, 1934, in Providence, Selya was the son of Herman and Betty Selya. He attended Nathan Bishop Middle School and Classical High School, where he excelled academically.

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He graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University in 1955 and earned his law degree from Harvard Law School in 1958.

After serving as a law clerk to Judge Edward W. Day of the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island from 1958 to 1960, Selya entered private practice in Providence. He also served as a Judge on the Lincoln, Rhode Island Probate Court from 1965 to 1972.

In 1982, President Ronald Reagan appointed Selya to the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island, after he was nominated by U.S. Senator John Chafee.

Selya had been an advisor to Chafee during his tenure as governor. the two were close political and personal friends.

Four years later, he was elevated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, where he served until assuming senior status in 2006.

During his tenure, he authored over 1,800 opinions.

On what would have been John Chafee's 100th birthday, GoLocal spoke with Selya about Chafee's legacy - **read that here**.

Beyond his judicial duties, Selya was a dedicated mentor to numerous law clerks, including future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

This obituary was written by GoLocal in conjunction with ChatGPT.



Judge Bruce Selya had died at 90. PHOTO: Public Domain

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