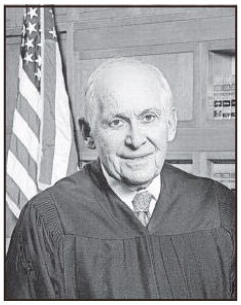
Judge Bruce M. Selya



PROVIDENCE - Judge Bruce M. Selya, age 90, of Providence, RI and West Harwich, MA passed away Saturday, February 22, 2025, after a brief illness surrounded by his loving family. He was the husband of Cynthia M. Selya, with whom he shared twenty-four years of marriage.

Judge Selya was among the longest serving federal appellate judges in the nation and is the author of more than 1,800 published opinions (many of which are regularly cited by other courts and in law school textbooks). Those collected opinions constitute a body of work that substantially exceeds that of any other judge who has served on the First Circuit Court of Appeals. Selya's body of work tops the previous mark set by the late Judge Frank Coffin by more than 400 opinions.

Judge Selya was also the longest serving federal judge in Rhode Island history and the only person of the Jewish faith ever to be appointed to the federal bench from Rhode Island. At the dedication of the Honorable Bruce M. Selya Appellate Court Room at Roger Williams University School of Law, then-Dean Michael Yelnosky described Selya as "the most influential jurist in the history of Rhode Island." A few years earlier, then-Governor Donald Carcieri described Selya as "the most gifted public speaker" in the state.

Judge Selya was born in Providence, Rhode Island, the son of the late Herman and Betty Selya, both of Providence. He was educated in the Providence public schools, graduating from Classical High School in 1951. He earned a scholarship to attend Harvard College and graduated in 1955. He received a bachelor's degree magna cum laude and was named a John Harvard Scholar. He next matriculated at Harvard Law School, receiving a juris doctor degree cum laude in 1958. Judge Selya was always quick to point out that throughout his seven years in Cambridge he worked thirty-five hours a week at a local haberdashery in addition to carrying out his academic responsibilities.

Following his graduation from law school, Selya returned to Providence and served for two years as a law clerk for Chief Judge Edward W. Day in the United States District Court for the District of Rhode Island. Judge Day became like a second father to the aspiring young lawyer, and Selya frequently remarked at how honored he felt when much later the Day family asked him to deliver the eulogy at Judge Day's funeral mass.

Selya passed the District of Columbia bar shortly after his graduation from Harvard Law School. He passed the Rhode Island bar in 1960 and after completing his clerkship joined the Providence law firm of Gunning & LaFazia (later renamed Gunning, LaFazia, Gnys and Selya). In 1972, Selya founded the firm of Selya & Iannuccillo (later renamed Selya, Iannuccillo & Greenwald), where he practiced for the next ten years.

In 1982, President Ronald Reagan nominated him to serve as a United States District Judge for the District of Rhode Island. He was confirmed by the United States Senate and took the oath of office on October 12, 1982, and he served in that capacity for the next four years. He presided over many significant cases and was particularly noted for his rulings in connection with gender discrimination. For instance, he presided over a series of six class actions that secured equity in pay, promotions, and tenure decisions for female faculty members at the University of Rhode Island. He also presided over the case that ensured equitable treatment for women at the Rhode Island Municipal Police Training Academy.

In the fall of 1986, Judge Selya was nominated by President Reagan to fill a newly created seat on the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. He was confirmed by voice vote of the United States Senate approximately two weeks later and became only the fifth Rhode Islander ever to reach such a high a position in the judicial hierarchy. Judge Selya continued to serve on that court although he elected to take senior status in 2006 while he carried a full caseload.

For the last twenty years of his career, Judge Selya worked with a severe visual disability and became legally blind several years before his death. This disability did not prevent him from carrying out his judicial duties, and many people marveled at how he was able to keep pace despite his lack of vision.

While serving as a United States Circuit Judge, Judge Selya also served in a variety of related capacities by appointment of Chief Justice Rehnquist and/or Chief Justice Roberts. He served as chair of the Judicial Conference's Committee on the Judicial Branch, as well as a director of the Federal Judicial Center and as a judge on the Judicial Panel for Multidistrict Litigation. In 2003, Chief Justice Rehnquist appointed Judge Selya to serve on the United States Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review. Three years later, Chief Justice Roberts named Selya the Chief Judge of that court, and Selya served in that capacity for the next four years.

He served as chairman of the board of trustees at Bryant University from 1984 through 1991 and led Bryant's transition from a business college to a full-scale university. His role, according to former Bryant President Ron Machtley was "transformational." He also joined the board of trustees at Rhode Island Hospital and in 1994 became the founding chairman of the Lifespan Health Care System (now Brown University Health). He was also instrumental in the creation of governance mechanisms for Roger Williams School of Law and served at various times, as both board chairman and vice-chairman. Judge Selya was also a long-time member of the board of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island and was the founding chairman of the Jewish Community Relations Council.

Before his ascension to the bench, Judge Selya also had a hand in politics. He helped in the election of the late John H. Chafee as governor in 1962, ran unsuccessfully as the Republican nominee for Attorney General in 1964, chaired Governor Chafee's re-election campaigns in 1966 and 1968, and chaired Chafee's successful run for a United States Senate seat in 1976.

Judge Selya has been awarded honorary Doctor of Laws degrees by Bryant University (1996) and Roger Williams University School of Law (2001). In 2009, Salve Regina University awarded him an honorary doctoral degree in Humane Letters. In 1988, Brandeis University presented Judge Selya with the Louis Dembitz Brandeis Medal for Distinguished Legal Service. In 1992, he was the recipient of the Neil J. Houston, Jr. Criminal Justice Award (presented by Justice Assistance). In 1998, the Jewish National Fund honored him with its Tree of Life Award for outstanding public service. In 2002, the Hospital Association of Rhode Island presented Judge Selya with the Benjamin R. Sturges Distinguished Service Award for his work in health care. In 2006, Judge Selya was inducted into the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame. In the same year, the Rhode Island Trial Lawyers Association honored him with its "Citizen of the Year" award.

On April 30, 2008, Judge Selya received Classical High School's "outstanding alumnus" award. Later that spring, he received the prestigious "History Maker" award from the Rhode Island Historical Society. On October 21, 2010, Justice Assistance presented Judge Selya with its Edward V. Healey, Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award. In December of 2010, the University Club of Rhode Island named Judge Selya "Man of the Year" for his achievements over the span of his career. In June of 2013, Judge Selya was the recipient of The Chief Justice Joseph R. Weisberger Judicial Excellence Award (presented by the Rhode Island Bar Association) as a tribute to his distinguished and exceptional career.

Judge Selya was internationally recognized for his mastery of the English language. He was the4 author of more than 1,800 published opinions.

He also wrote over a dozen law review articles, which have been published in, among others, the University of Texas Law Review, the Notre Dame Law Review, the Ohio State Law Journal, the Boston College Law Review, the Suffolk Law Review, the Brooklyn Law Review, and the Florida State University Law Review.

Judge Selya had been the subject of profiles in The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Providence Sunday Journal, and many other periodicals. He had been interviewed on the BBC by England's poet laureate in connection with his use of language. In 2006, he was honored by Wordsmith International and has appeared as a guest wordsmith for its acclaimed "A.Word.A.Day" series.

Judge Selya and his wife, Cindy, always had particular pride in their sponsorship of the Judge Bruce M. Selya and Cynthia M. Selya Special Integrated Care Unit, familiarly known, as "Selya Six," a joint venture of Hasbro Children's Hospital and Bradley Hospital, which has received national recognition for its unique care protocols. They are also the sponsors of The Judge Bruce M. and Cynthia M. Selya Employee Wellness Center at the Miriam Hospital.

Judge Selya was a member of Temple Beth El in Providence. He also was a member or former member of the Rhode Island Commodores, the University Club, the Harvard Club, the Harvard Law School Association, the Ronald Reagan Alumni Association, the Belmont Beach Club (West Harwich, MA), the Friends of the Metropolitan Opera, the Conductor's Circle of the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra, the Rhode Island Historical Society, the Squantum Association, the Agawam Hunt Club, and the Rhode Island School of Design Museum.

In addition to his wife Cindy, he is survived by two daughters, Dawn Selya, and Lori Ann Young and her husband Daniel Patrick Young, Sr., of Dedham, MA; six grandchildren: Bradford Parker Sherman, Samantha Lyn Hochstetler and her husband Nathan, Paige Emerson Young, Daniel Patrick Young, Jr., William Colby Young, and Thomas Preston Young; two great-granddaughters, Elliana James Hochstetler and Adalynn Baker Hochstetler. Judge Selya is also survived by his sister, Susan Jane Rosen and her husband David of Boston, MA and their son, Joel Rosen.

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served in that capacity for the next four years.

Judge Selya has also been a force in ensuring the quality and stature of the Rhode Island bar. A member of the Rhode Island Bar Association since 1960, he was the founding chairman of the Rhode Island State-Federal Judicial Council, and he continued to serve in that capacity.

Throughout his judicial career, Judge Selya displayed a keen interest in legal education. He held faculty appointments at Boston College Law School,

Boston, MA and their son, Joel Rosen

His Funeral Service will be held Monday, March 3, 2025, at 11:00 am at Temple Beth-El, 70 Orchard Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island. Burial will follow in Swan Point Cemetery, Providence. Shiva will be private.

Those unable to attend the funeral service may join via livestream at https://www.temple-beth-el.org/live-streaming

Memorial contributions in his honor may be made to the Selya Medical

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