

DEATH OF CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

MONDAY, JUNE 26, 1995

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Present: CHIEF JUSTICE REHNQUIST, JUSTICE O'CONNOR, JUSTICE SCALIA, JUSTICE KENNEDY, JUSTICE SOUTER, JUSTICE THOMAS, JUSTICE GINSBURG, and JUSTICE BREYER.

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THE CHIEF JUSTICE said:

As we open this morning, I announce with sadness that our friend and colleague Warren Earl Burger, former Chief Justice of this Court, died yesterday in the early morning, at Sibley Hospital in Washington, D. C.

He was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1907. He was a self-made man. Not having the finances to attend college full time he sold insurance during the day to pay his way through night school. He spent two years at the University of Minnesota and then graduated with honors four years later from the Mitchell College of Law, formerly the St. Paul College of Law.

His remarkable professional career began with a long tenure at a private firm in St. Paul where he specialized in civil and administrative practice. While in private practice, he made time to be an adjunct professor of contracts and actively participated in local civic and political organizations. In 1953, President Eisenhower appointed him to the Department of Justice as an Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Civil Division. A few years later, he was nominated to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, where he served for 13 years until his ap-

pointment as Chief Justice of the United States by President Nixon in 1969.

He served as Chief Justice for 17 years and will long be remembered as a major contributor to the decisional law of this Court. He was also an innovative reformer of the administration of justice. As appellate judge he had helped establish the Appellate Judges' Seminar at New York University and later cochaired an eight-year study for the ABA on standards of criminal justice. As Chief Justice, he reduced the time for oral arguments in our own Court from two hours to one hour, he introduced modern technology to the processing of opinions, he changed our straight bench into a bench with its current wings, and he helped found the Supreme Court Historical Society. For the judicial system as a whole, he helped create or sponsor, a series of institutions to foster more efficient ways to do justice in the nation's courts. These included the Institute for Court Management, the National Center for State Courts, the state-federal judicial councils, the expansion of the Federal Judicial Center, and the annual Brookings Seminars at which leaders of the three branches met to discuss judicial reform.

Following his retirement as Chief Justice in 1986, he continued his commitment to public service and devoted large amounts of his time to the Chairing of the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution. And as a result of his efforts as chairman of that Commission, millions and millions of people who were previously unacquainted with the United States Constitution became acquainted with it.

The members of the Court will greatly miss Chief Justice Burger's energy and warmth, and I speak for all of them in expressing our profound sympathy to his son Wade, his daughter Margaret Mary, his grandchildren, and to all those whose lives were touched by this remarkable man and his wife Vera, who died last year. The recess the Court takes today will be in his memory. At an appropriate time, the traditional memorial observance of the Court and Bar of the Court will be held in this Courtroom.