

Landmark Courthouse Named for Respected Judge

In late 2004, Congress authorized naming the historic Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals building in San Francisco after Senior Circuit Judge James R. Browning, one of the nation's longest serving federal judges and an architect of the modern federal court system in the West.

The long-awaited honor resulted from inclusion of legislation in a federal omnibus spending bill passed into law by President Bush on Dec. 10, 2004. The legislation, sponsored by Rep. Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco, officially designated the magnificent *beaux arts* style building as the James R. Browning United States Courthouse.

In introducing the bill, Rep. Pelosi said she was pleased that Judge Browning would be able to witness "this much-deserved tribute to his lifetime of public service."

Judge Browning, who celebrated his 86th birthday in October, has his chambers in the San Francisco courthouse.

Nominated by President John F. Kennedy, Judge Browning received his commission to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on Sept. 18, 1961. Over the next 43 years, Judge Browning participated in almost 1,000 published appellate decisions and authored many other unsigned *per curiam* opinions. Colleagues have described him as "the consummate appellate judge" who made seminal contributions to national antitrust jurisprudence.



Court staff greeted Judge Browning with a paper banner on the day the courthouse was named in his honor.

Judge Browning was elevated to chief judge of the Ninth Circuit in 1976 and served in that position for 12 years. During his tenure as chief, Judge Browning reorganized and modernized the administration of the circuit. Many judges who worked with Judge Browning during his time as chief judge recall fondly the emphasis he placed on judicial collegiality. He also was remembered for working to ensure that citizens had access to the justice system.

"Judge Browning's contributions to the law and to judicial governance have been immense," Chief Judge Mary M. Schroeder of Phoenix said. "As chief, he was a visionary and innovator who made inclusiveness and communication key principles in the functioning of the circuit."

Born in Great Falls, Mont., Judge Browning received his juris doctorate degree from Montana State University Law School in

1941. He graduated at the top of his class and served as editor-in-chief of the law review. With the onset of World War II, Judge Browning entered the U.S. Army, rising to the rank of first lieutenant and winning a Bronze Star Medal for heroism.

After the war, Judge Browning left military service and took a job with the U.S. Department of Justice. He rose steadily in the ranks, serving in several positions in the anti-trust division, eventually becoming the executive assistant to the Attorney General of the United States, 1952 to 1953. In 1953, he organized and served as first chief of the Executive Office of United States Attorneys.

Judge Browning left the DOJ in 1953 to enter into private practice as a partner in a law firm in Washington, D.C. He returned to government service in 1958 as the clerk of the United States Supreme Court. As clerk, he held the Bible used to swear President Kennedy into office in 1961. He was the last clerk of the court to perform this ceremonial task, which now is performed by the spouses of incoming presidents.

In 1991, Judge Browning received the Edward J. Devitt Award for Distinguished Service to Justice, recognizing his many contributions to the judicial system. He also was honored by his Ninth Circuit colleagues and prominent members of the bar and academia at a special ceremony in 2001 marking his 40th year on the bench.

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JAMES R. BROWNING UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

95