

**U.S. DISTRICT COURT for the
WESTERN DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY**

PRESS RELEASE

U.S. District Court Judge Edward H. Johnstone, (1922-2013): a man called to be a judge

“I am uncertain as to whether leaders are born or made. The same may be said with those we selectively call great. I do believe we recognize greatness when we see it. Judge Edward Huggins Johnstone is a great judge and a great person.” Senior U.S. District Court Judge Thomas B. Russell, *Judge Edward H. Johnstone: A Great Judge from the Greatest Generation*, The Storied Third Branch, Duke Law School, December 2012.

It is with profound sadness that the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Kentucky announces that it has lost one of its own. On June 26, 2013, Judge Johnstone passed away at The Forum in Louisville, Kentucky. A native of Princeton, Kentucky, Judge Johnstone spent 27 years in private practice before his appointment to the state court bench in 1976. Only a short time later would he heed the call from President Jimmy Carter to take up duties as a U.S. District Court Judge in Paducah, Kentucky, where he served with distinction until taking inactive senior status in January 2011.

From 1985 to 1990, Judge Johnstone served as Chief Judge for the Western District of Kentucky. Chief Justice Rehnquist appointed him to serve on the Judicial Conference of the United States from 1991 to 1993. While Judge Johnstone received many honors and awards during his career as a federal judge, he is best known for his devotion to public service and commitment to equal justice for all. To his law clerks, he would emphasize the importance of treating everyone who appeared before him with the utmost respect, whether lawyer or prisoner. And for those who served with him as judges, he demonstrated that one can exercise judicial authority without sacrificing humility. He set the standard for prisoner class action litigation, overseeing a consent decree that forever changed and improved the conditions of confinement in Kentucky’s prisons, ensuring that inmates would not be forced to live in barbaric conditions.

Judge Johnstone’s entire career exemplified a commitment to equal justice under the law that has served as an example to the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the nation. The greatest landmark of his career, however, was his indelible impact on the minds and hearts of all with whom he came into contact. He set the standard for fairness, compassion, and humanity by which the rest of the state and federal bench will be judged for generations to come. His work has been characterized by a searching and inquiring intellect, an extended hand, an adherence to the law, and an open heart. His work with the Western District of Kentucky was more than a job; it was his vocation. He will be missed by all.