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A Tribute to Judge Cecil F. Poole

Judge Joseph T. Sneed

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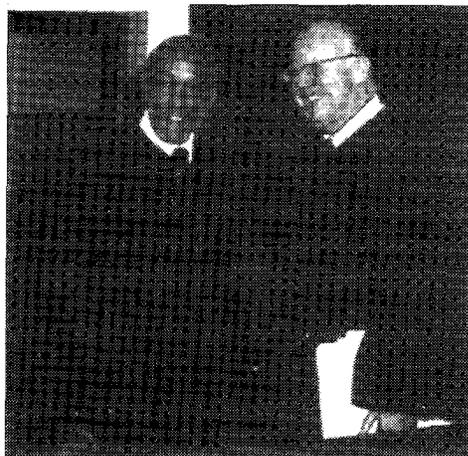
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A TRIBUTE
by
Senior Circuit Judge
Joseph T. Sneed



Cecil was a black man whose life exemplified the fundamental justice of racial equality. Born in a place and at a time in which discrimination against blacks was a paramount policy, he rose to serve honorably this nation in four positions of power and distinction--Legal Counsel and Executive Clemency Secretary to California Governor Pat Brown, United States Attorney, District Judge, and a member of this Court.



Cecil's necessary and recurring resistance to racial discrimination did not leave him embittered. Quite the contrary. When I first came to know him, he manifested an internal serenity that enabled him to approach all matters with an admirable degree of objectivity. Of course, he was sensitive to matters of race, but even there his approach was one of quiet, implacable firmness.

It is not too much to say that Cecil revered the law and its processes. He brought to each case wisdom forged in the fires of experience, which enabled him to discern quickly affectations of false piety. In discharging his duties as a judge, he recognized that his power rested ultimately on the general acceptance by the people of the balances judges repeatedly strike between competing interests. Thus, his decisions reflected that delicate and essential balance between stability and change.

I speak of these matters with conviction because Cecil and I shared many lunches together. Our conversations ranged from our childhoods to the latest attention-getting decision of our Court. There is no better way of enabling two persons to come to an understanding of one another.

The lunches also revealed that Cecil had an interest, which I share, in the history of this Court. His photographs of many of the informal activities of the Court constitute a treasure that should be organized and preserved.



Let me relate a story that links Cecil with another of my departed friends, Judge Ben Duniway of this court. Ben was OPA Administrator for most of the West Coast during World War II and immediately thereafter. He employed Cecil after his discharge from military service. Ben related that at the initial interview Cecil, in uniform as I recall, appeared with his wife, Charlotte. "They were the most beautiful couple I had ever seen," Ben said. Having seen a few pictures of them of that period, I know Ben did not exaggerate.

salute Charlotte and Cecil. Each brought charm, dignity, and wisdom to our family of judges and spouses. We are grateful for the time you were with us.