

# TRIBUTE TO JUDGE E. GRADY JOLLY

*Senator Thad Cochran\**

A number of very capable attorneys expressed interest in the seat on the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals when J.P. Coleman announced his retirement. Grady Jolly was best qualified among them and so was my choice to recommend to President Ronald Reagan. It took quite some time to convince the President to nominate him, and I joked with Grady that by the time his nomination was official he would have to take senior status. But President Reagan called Grady on June 30, 1982, and announced the nomination publically the following day. In less than a month, the U.S. Senate had unanimously confirmed Grady, and the rest, as they say, has been history.

I've known Grady since our days as students at the University of Mississippi. In 1957, we served together in the executive branch of the Associated Student Body—and he was in charge of public relations and I was in charge of student activities. We both ran for office the following year: I was elected Vice President; he lost a narrow run-off for President. But in many ways, he was more the natural politician than I was, and perhaps as we began our legal careers I harbored thoughts of one day becoming a judge myself. But such was not to be the case, and when I launched my first campaign for U.S. Senate, Grady was by my side as the campaign chairman.

From our time at Ole Miss, while working as young lawyers in Jackson, and through my career in elected office and his career on the Court, our friendship grew stronger. My late wife Rose and I counted Grady and his late wife Bettye among our closest and most trusted friends. On so many evenings we discussed not only the topics of the day, but music, art, and cuisine. Grady is the epitome of a “Renaissance man” with an acerbic wit and contagious humor.

At his swearing in ceremony, Judge Jolly said, “I do not approach this task believing at all that federal courts are all-wise

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and all-knowing. Some judges are criticized for arrogance and self-righteousness, for attempting to play God. Our powers may seem near that sometimes, but our wisdom falls far short. When I get out of line, I deserve to be criticized.”

There is no criticism from me today for my dear friend and the “dean among judges” in Mississippi.

When I recommended Grady to President Reagan, I said, “He is well suited for this important job by reason of his education, philosophy, and experience, and I’m confident that he would be one of the outstanding members of the court.” Now, thirty-five years later, I am convinced Grady’s service has proven those words accurate.