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National Museum of African American History and Culture

Delegate Magazine 1976

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Judge Hastie Dies

Judge William H. Hastie, former chief judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, died Thursday, April 14, of an apparent heart attack.

Judge Hastie, 71, collapsed while playing golf at the Center Square (Pa.) Golf Club and was pronounced dead at Suburban General Hospital in East Norriton.

Born in Knoxville, Tenn., Judge Hastie was also a former governor of the Virgin Islands.

Judge Hastie served as chief judge of the Court of Appeals from 1968 to 1971, when he retired from full-time service. He continued to serve as a senior judge and sat frequently on cases in the Federal Courts as he was needed. He most recently was assigned to the Fourth Circuit Court in Virginia and the Temporary Emergency Court of Appeals in Washington.

Teamed with Thurgood

He was prominent in many civil rights efforts. As chairman of the National Legal Committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, he and Thurgood Marshall, now a U.S. Supreme Court Justice, once teamed up to win a major Supreme Court decision striking down segregation in interstate passenger transportation.

Judge Hastie graduated from Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., in 1921, and earned a bachelor's degree from Amherst College in 1925. He also held Bachelor of Laws and Doctor of Juristic Science degrees from Harvard University, received in 1930 and 1933, respectively.

Civil Rights Architect

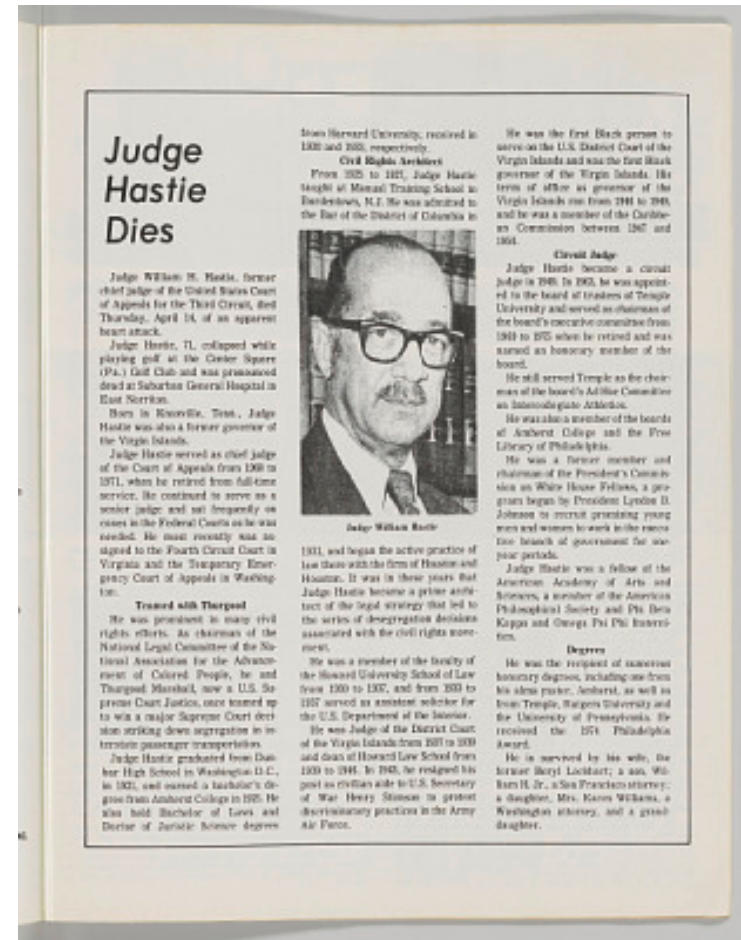
[[image - black & white photograph of Judge William Hastie]]

From 1925 to 1927, Judge Hastie taught at Manual Training School in Bordentown, N.J. He was admitted to the Bar of the District of Columbia in 1931, and began the active practice of law there with the firm of Houston and Houston. It was in these years that Judge Hastie became a prime architect of the legal strategy that led to the series of desegregation decisions associated with the civil rights movement.

He was a member of the faculty of the Howard University School of Law from 1930 to 1937, and from 1933 to 1937 served as assistant solicitor for the U.S. Department of the Interior.

He was Judge of the District Court of the Virgin Islands from 1937 to 1939 and dean of Howard Law School from 1939 to 1946. In 1943, he resigned his post as civilian aide to U.S. Secretary of War Henry Stimson to protest discriminatory practices in the Army Air Force.

He was the first Black person to serve on the U.S. District Court of the



Virgin Islands and was the first Black governor of the Virgin Islands. His term of office as governor of the Virgin Islands ran from 1946 to 1949, and he was a member of the Caribbean Commission between 1947 and 1950.

Circuit Judge

Judge Hastie became a circuit judge in 1949. In 1963, he was appointed to the board of trustees of Temple University and served as chairman of the board's executive committee from 1969 to 1975 when he retired and was named an honorary member of the board.

He still served Temple as the chairman of the board's Ad Hoc Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics.

He was also a member of the boards of Amherst College and the Free Library of Philadelphia.

He was a former member and chairman of the President's Commission on White House Fellows, a program begun by President Lyndon B. Johnson to recruit promising young men and women to work in the executive branch of government for one-year periods.

Judge Hastie was a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a member of the American Philosophical Society and Phi Beta Kappa and Omega Psi Phi fraternities.

Degrees

He was the recipient of numerous honorary degrees, including one from his alma mater, Amherst, as well as from Temple, Rutgers University and the University of Pennsylvania. He received the 1974 Philadelphia Award.

He is survived by his wife, the former Beryl Lockhart; a son, William H. Jr., a San Francisco attorney; a daughter, Mrs. Karen Williams, a Washington attorney, and a grand-daughter.

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