

IN MEMORIAM

## C. CLIFTON YOUNG: A DISTINGUISHED NEVADAN FOR ALL REASONS, FOR ALL SEASONS

BY JOHN H. MOWBRAY, ESQ.



Former Nevada Supreme Court Chief Justice C. Clifton Young passed away on April 3, at 93 years of age. Family, friends and colleagues recently celebrated Justice Young's extraordinary life at the old Reno post office — an appropriate venue that featured strongly at both the beginning and the conclusion of one of the most distinguished careers in the history of the Nevada bar and judiciary—a journey marked with personal and professional achievements.

In 2002, Justice Young became the first sitting Nevada Supreme Court Justice of the modern era whose retirement from public service was honored by the State Bar of Nevada at its Annual Meeting. As noted by former law partner and current Nevada Supreme Court Justice James Hardesty, the *Nevada Appeal* observed in 2003 that, "his life reads like a civics lesson with a sagebrush twist. He is a man who loves life and the law." Young was often revered as the father of the Washoe County Open Space and

Regional Parks Department; former director Karen Mullen noted that Young, along with his friend and Nevada lawyer Thomas Cooke, co-authored the first open-space masterplan for Washoe County in 1962 to preserve the vistas and landscapes of the Washoe valley and Sierra Nevada mountains for the benefit of the generations to come. Just as important, he balanced a lifetime of extraordinary public service with devotion to his family. Married to the late Loretta "Jane" Hempfling Gibson, the Youngs had four children: Diana Young Monfalcone, LaVonne Young Duhon, Clifton James Young and Robert Alfred Young; nine grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.



Young and his wife valued Nevada's open spaces during their lives.



Young served in the U.S. Army during WWII.



A native of Lovelock, Young was the valedictorian of his high school and graduated from the University of Nevada in 1943, receiving the school's Gold Medal. He served in the Infantry during World War II, rose to the rank of major and saw action in General George Patton's U.S. Seventh Army on the front lines in France, Germany and Austria, where he was awarded a Bronze Star. Young graduated from Harvard Law School in 1949, returned home and became a member of the State Bar of Nevada. He then launched what was to become a storied career.

In 1953, during President Dwight D. Eisenhower's inaugural term, Young was elected as Nevada's sole member of the U.S. House of Representatives and served until 1956. A self-styled Herbert-Hoover-Republican, he took positions not always popular within his own party. He supported women's rights, introducing the Equal Rights Amendment in Congress, supported pro-choice and Planned Parenthood, and opposed the Sagebrush Rebellion. He served in the Nevada State Senate from 1966 to 1980, and was inducted into the Nevada Legislature's Hall of Fame. In 1984, Young was elected to the first of his three terms on the Nevada Supreme Court; he served as Chief Justice from 1989-1990 and again from 2000-2002. Young became only the third judge in history honored by the Nevada Supreme Court's Legacy of Justice Award, recognizing those who pioneered innovations in our judicial system. Last, but not least, at the celebration of his life that took place on April 17, Young received the University of Nevada's most prestigious award, bestowed upon prominent individuals who have made significant achievements contributing to the cultural, scientific or social advancement of Nevada: the Distinguished Nevadan Award.

At the April memorial, Young's son Cliff recalled that his parents always assured him and his siblings they could accomplish any goal they set, if they applied themselves. Young was a seasoned storyteller who loved reciting and memorizing poetry. His daughter LaVonne Duhon spoke of a time, when she was 8 years old and wanted 50 cents to go to a movie; her dad made her flex her mental muscles by memorizing a few limericks:

I eat my peas with honey  
I've done it all my life  
It makes the peas taste funny  
But it keeps them on my knife.

And:

A bear sleeps in a little bear skin  
He sleeps very well I am told  
Last night I slept in my little bare skin  
And caught a heck of a cold.

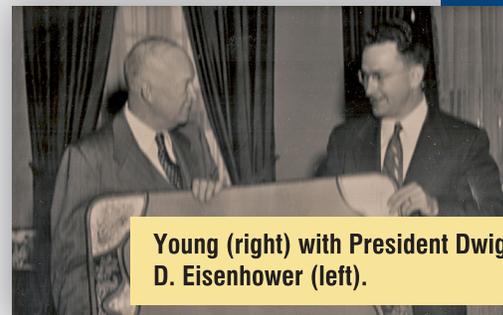
Duhon has long-forgotten the film, but the fond memory of those early poetry experiences with her father will remain for the rest of her days.

Young's grandson, Eric Duhon, remembered his grandfather giving him a choice: he could memorize poetry typed on index cards or pull weeds to earn his keep. His granddaughter, Carissa Bouwer, recalled her grandpa's encouragement building her confidence, as he coached her with effective techniques for speech and debate, drawing from his days at the University of Nevada, where he and future Nevada lawyer Pete Echeverria were teammates on the debate team, which won the 1943 Pacific Coast Debate Championship.



(Left to right) Young with then-Governor Paul Laxalt and President Richard Nixon.

Justice Hardesty may have summarized Justice Young's life the best in referring to then Senator Young's March 28, 1969 remarks, entered in the Journal of the Fifty-Fifth Session of the Nevada Legislature on the occasion the passing of President Dwight Eisenhower. "They say a politician is one who looks to the next election, a statesman is one who looks to the next generation..." and then, no doubt drawing on his lifelong interest in poetry, Senator Young paraphrased:



Young (right) with President Dwight D. Eisenhower (left).

When a star dies on high, for ages will its light  
Traveling down upon earth, shine on mortal sight  
So when a good man dies, for years beyond our ken  
Will the light he leaves behind, shine on the lives of men.

So it will be with C. Clifton Young. All who were fortunate enough to have been guided by his light will forever be enriched by the radiance of his example and spirit. **NL**

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