

JUDGE GENE GLENN, OTTUMWA, IOWA



Retired Judge and former State Senator, Gene W. Glenn, 94, of Ottumwa, died at 11:15 p.m. September 30, 2023, at Vista Woods Care Center.

He was born November 13, 1928, near Bladensburg, rural Wapello County, to Walter and Iona Glenn.

Judge Glenn grew up in rural Wapello County, attending one-room schoolhouses, winning the Wapello County spelling contest as an 8th grader, thereafter, entering the Ottumwa High School system, where he maintained honor roll status, played right tackle on the undefeated State co-champion Bulldog football team of 1945, served on the Student Council and was elected Vice President of his senior class. In 1947 he was selected as a delegate to the World Conference of Christian Youth in Oslo, Norway, with trip expenses contributed by civic organizations of Ottumwa.

He worked his way through college at the University of Iowa by summer employment at John Deere Ottumwa Works, graduating in 1950, thereafter served three years in the U.S. Army, studied one year at the University of Stockholm and worked as a Congressional Aide in Washington, D.C. simultaneously attending the George Washington University Law School. In 1962, he returned to the Ottumwa area, ran unsuccessfully as the Democratic nominee for Congress, thereafter, commencing private law practice in Ottumwa. Following suspension from practice, he worked as a day laborer at John Morrell & Co. in Ottumwa.

In 1964 he was elected to the Iowa House of Representatives from Wapello County, serving on the Judiciary Committee where he sponsored creation of the office of Public Defender. In a speech on the House floor, he blocked appointment of the intended judicial nominee, leading to appointment of Arthur McGiverin as a District Court Judge, who later served as an outstanding Chief Justice of the Iowa Supreme Court. In 1966 he was elected to the State Senate, being appointed to the Judiciary Committee. Later, as Chairman of the Committee, he managed enactment of the historic Criminal Code revision bill, authored many of the Juvenile Justice Law provisions and enabled creating of the Iowa Court of Appeals. His speech on the Senate floor led to the John Morrell & Co. packing plant in Ottumwa extending its operations an additional three years before permanently closing. He also provided a key vote for passage of the environmentally friendly "bottle bill." In all he served 14 consecutive years in the Iowa Legislature.

In 1982 Chief Judge Phillip R. Collett and the District Judges appointed him Juvenile Referee for the 10 county Judicial District 8A, whereupon he closed his private law practice of almost 20 years and entered upon judicial service for nearly 17 years. While in this position, later designated Associate Juvenile Judge, he conducted approximately 17,000 hearings, served on

4 Iowa Supreme Court Advisory Committees, in 1990 being named Child Advocate of the Year by the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association and in 1994 recipient of the Outstanding Service Award by the Jefferson County Children's Alliance. In 1997 he instituted the CASA Volunteer program in Wapello County Juvenile Court. Upon his retirement in January 1999, he established the Foster Care Scholarship Fund for the Eighth Judicial District, contributing generously thereto until his death.

Judge Glenn was an ardent tennis player, winning a number of Ottumwa tennis tournaments over the years, playing competitively into his 70's. He also bicycled frequently, gardened enthusiastically, went downhill skiing in the Rockies with Diane and at her urging took up golf at age 70. He was an avid bridge player, extensive reader and authored four books: one, "Montage" a book of verse; "Capitol Caldron", an account of his legislative experiences; "Selected Remembrances", a variety of compositions written or delivered over the years charactering significant persons and events in his life; and "Boat House to Bench", an account of his rise from judicial obloquy to judicial investiture. He leaves behind a full life.

Judge Glenn is survived by his wife, Diane; stepdaughters, Laura (Tom) Pratt of Sioux City and Barrie Jeanne (Darren) Kempkes of Orange, CA; 5 cherished step-grandchildren; and nieces, Sheila (Rick) Glenn-Whitfield of Excelsior Springs, MO and Kimberly (Steve) Lowry of Sidney, NE.

He was preceded in death by a younger sister, Virginia and his brother, Robert Glenn.