

Honorable Watt Edmund Prather, Ret. 1928 - 2014

Judge Prather passed away peacefully on Dec. 19, 2014 in Meridian, Idaho. Watt was born Oct. 12, 1925 in Gooding, Idaho to Frances Fern and Van Benton Prather. He grew up on a farm and was very active in 4H, particularly in animal production. He exhibited in many fairs across southern Idaho and at livestock shows at Portland, Ogden, Salt Lake, and San Francisco World's Fair. In 1941, he was named Idaho 4H State Champion in Livestock production. Also in 1941 he was awarded a full scholarship by Union Pacific to study agriculture. He declined the scholarship, with his father's blessing because he wanted to study Law. He graduated valedictorian from Gooding High School at age 16 and enrolled at the University of Idaho. In February of 1943 he enlisted in the [United States Navy](#) Air Corp. He always said, "He joined the Navy to see the world and they sent me to Pocatello". The experience in the Navy took him to many locations in the United States which left him with the firm conviction that he wanted to live in Idaho. His time in the Navy also included schooling at Columbia University in New York. He did not finish flight training because Japan surrendered and the Navy did not need pilots anymore. He was next sent to Shanghai and China and was made a Communications Officer on an LST. The LST carried United Nations Relief supplies for China up the Yangtze River, Hankou and Nanking then transported Army vehicles for Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek down river as he retreated before the forces of Mao Zedong. After he returned to the United States from [World War II](#) he enrolled at the University of Idaho, College of Law, graduating in 1949 fulfilling a lifelong dream to become a lawyer at age 23. In December 1948 he married Margaret McNamara of Great Falls Montana and had four children: Van, Ryan, Cory, and Marla.

After graduation he entered practice with Hardy Lyons and later with Peter B. Wilson in Bonners Ferry. That partnership lasted until he was appointed to District Judge in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The law practice flourished and he served as City Attorney for Bonners Ferry and County Attorney for Boundary County. In 1950 he purchased the controlling interest in Boundary Abstract Company LTD which he honed and managed until June of 1966. In addition, he operated a cattle ranch near the Canadian Border.

In 1960 Governor Robert E. Smylie appointed him State Senator of Boundary County. He was thereafter elected to serve terms in 1961 and 1963. He was chairman of the Senate Committees on Industry and Labor, and Commerce and Development, as well as a member of the State Affairs Committee and of the committee on Counties and Municipalities. He was Vice President of the Idaho State Prosecuting Attorneys association and was President of the Eighth Judicial District Bar association. He was a member of Phi Alpha Delta legal fraternity, the Elks, past president of Kiwanis and active in the American Legion and the Chamber of Commerce. In addition, Watt was also involved in various committees such as Court Modernization, Comprehensive Court Planning and the Governor's Council for Criminal Justice.

In December of 1965 Governor Smylie appointed him as District Judge for the 1st Judicial District. This required him to move to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. He served as Judge until he retired in 1986. In many of those years he served as Administrative Judge. He was an active member of court reform and co-authored Civil Rules of Procedures, Idaho Jury Instructions, Idaho Trial Judges Manual and Sentencing Manual for Idaho Judges.

After retirement Watt still continued to enjoy the profession he loved so much. He became busy as an arbitrator, helping parties come to mutual decisions outside of the court. He also enjoyed teaching Law classes at North Idaho College. He loved giving back and helping the new students discover their passion for law and politics.

Watt married Jeannie Cannon in 1972 and they had one daughter, Leslie Anne. They built a house that Watt designed overlooking the beautiful Coeur d'Alene Lake, painting it his favorite color red. When the judges robe came off on the weekends he spent most of his time enjoying and caring for his property and was always trying to find new ways to keep the deer from eating his garden. He would never tire of seeing the eagles fly over Wolf Lodge Bay. Summers were always filled with his love of travel with a long vacation to new places and museums to explore. After retirement he and Jeannie moved to Hayden Lake, ID where he once again became involved in the community as President of the Neighborhood Association. They purchased a motorhome and spent several years traveling and enjoying the warm winters in Arizona. When they were ready to settle down they moved to Meridian, ID to be near his daughter and son-in-law, Leslie and Brad, and his two grandsons, Lane and Lucas. Watt and Jeannie spent many happy and proud hours watching the boys' soccer games. One of his proudest moments before he passed was seeing Lane's Letter of Intent to play soccer in college and hearing that Lucas was nominated to attend an Engineering/Math conference at Berkley. Watt is survived by his wife Jeannie and his constant companion Beau, three sons; Van of California, Ryan of Oregon and Cory of Washington, and two daughters Marla (Stan) Slutz of Nevada, and Leslie (Brad) Thorne of Kuna, Idaho and his two grandsons of which he was very proud, Lane and Lucas Thorne.

He was preceded in death by his parents Van and Fern Prather; sister Johnette Braga of Gooding and Arizona and brother Lt. Col. Eugene C Prather of Spokane, Washington and Oceanside, California and many nieces and nephews.

The family would like to express their gratitude to Treasure Valley Hospice and to the staff at Spring Creek Manor at Calderwood for their many kindnesses and care.

Services for the Honorable Watt E Prather will be Monday, Dec. 29, 2014 at Alden-Waggoner Funeral Chapel in Boise, ID at 1:00pm. A committal service will be held at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery at 3:00pm. A viewing will be held on Sunday, Dec. 28, 2014 from 5:00-7:00pm at Alden-Waggoner Funeral Chapel.