

Michael D. Ryan

Arizona Supreme Court Justice (Ret.)

Michael D. Ryan passed away on Monday, January 30, 2012. He was 66. His friends, family, and colleagues are shocked and saddened by his sudden passing.

Justice Ryan retired from the Arizona Supreme Court in August of 2010, after serving as a Judge in Arizona for more than 24 years. A life-long community servant, his passing has left a huge loss for everyone who knew and loved him and for Arizonans who depended on him as a patient, careful and thoughtful jurist.

Family and friends will remember Mike as a loving, kind, and thoughtful man. He found the love of his life early on and loved her until the day he died. Karen was his partner in life and his best friend, and together they raised three sons. In recent years, they became proud grandparents of two beautiful grandchildren. From 1974 through 2000, Mike and Karen cared for more than 80 high risk infants, before they were placed for adoption or returned to their birth parents.



Colleagues of Justice Ryan will remember him as a brilliant legal mind. His kind, soft-spoken demeanor masked a fair and thoughtful jurist who managed his courtroom in a firm but respectful manner. His straightforward approach on the bench was respected by all who appeared before him, as well as those who served beside him. Even in retirement, Justice Ryan continued to serve the state as chairperson for several Supreme Court Committees and as visiting Justice on several cases. Throughout his career, he volunteered his time to numerous charitable and professional boards. He was a familiar face around the courthouse and spent part of his last day at the Supreme Court -- a place in the world he loved, filled with people who loved him.

Before his appointment to the Supreme Court in 2002, Justice Ryan served on the Arizona Court of Appeals, Division One, for more than five years and as a Judge of the Arizona Superior Court in Maricopa County for more than ten years.

As a trial judge, Justice Ryan presided over a number of high-profile cases on the Maricopa County Superior Court, including AzScam, the Phoenix Suns' drug case, and the criminal trial of Governor Evan Mecham. Before becoming a judge, Justice Ryan was Deputy County Attorney in the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, where he served in the major felony bureau and the office's sex crimes unit.

Justice Ryan received his B.A. degree from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota in 1967. After college he served in the United States Marine Corps as an infantry platoon commander from 1967 to 1969. He received a medical retirement because of wounds received in combat in Vietnam and was awarded two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star with a Combat "V" for heroism in combat. Justice Ryan came to Arizona in 1970 and later obtained his Juris Doctorate degree from Arizona State University Law School in 1977.

Justice Michael Ryan is survived by his wife Karen, sons Michael (Michelle), Kevin, and Chris (Jenny), grandchildren Alicia and Aidan, sisters Kathy (Jim Elson), and Megan (Bob Kline), brothers Matthew and Patrick, nieces Mary and Cassandra, and scores of adoring Minnesota cousins. The Justice was predeceased by his parents Don and Kay, and beloved brother Sean and sister-in law Janice.

A funeral mass will be held at St. Francis Xavier Church 4715 N Central Ave Phoenix, AZ on Friday, February 3, 2012 at 3:00PM with visitation one hour before.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation and the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund.

www.mcsf.org/judgeryan www.semperfund.org