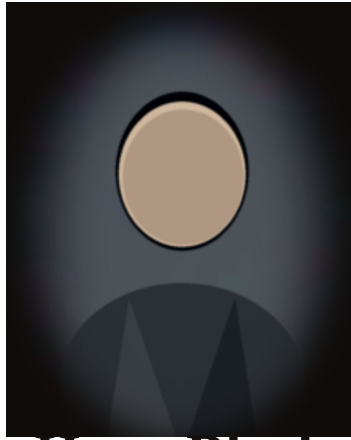




Hugo Black

February 27, 1886 - September 25, 1971

Bethesda, Maryland

Hugo LaFayette Black - Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court whose literal reading of the Bill of Rights reshaped twentieth-century constitutional law - died in Bethesda, Maryland, on September 25, 1971. He was eighty-five. Born February 27, 1886, in Clay County, Alabama, he practiced and prosecuted in Birmingham, served in the Senate, and in 1937 joined the Court after a nomination fight that forced a public reckoning with his brief early Ku Klux Klan membership - a shadow he spent decades trying to outrun with opinions that expanded free speech and incorporation of rights against the states.

He wrote with a plain-spoken force that clerks and later historians still quote. On the First Amendment he often sounded absolutist; on race and criminal procedure he helped move the Court through the mid-century rights revolution even as colleagues sometimes parted ways with his method. Retirement came only days before a stroke closed the ledger.

Bethesda Naval Hospital was the last ward after thirty-four years on the bench. He died of complications following stroke and arterial disease, leaving opinions that still sit open on advocacy desks.

Silent-era training left her with a face that could hold a secret across a two-shot; directors used that stillness the way later actors use monologues. She wrote about the cost of that life with a candor rarer than studio publicity allowed.

She revised editions as telephones, cars, and wartime rationing changed the dinner table, treating etiquette as living code rather than fossilized snobbery. The Institute that carries her name still fields questions that sound

modern because courtesy never stops needing translation.

Clerkships under him were notorious for draft after draft until the opinion spoke like a person who meant every noun. Alabama roots and Court chambers made an unlikely pairing that still defines how incorporation debates begin.

He died in Bethesda on September 25, 1971. Law students still underline his First Amendment sentences in the margin.

Black's gift was textual stubbornness - insisting the Constitution meant what it said even when power preferred fog. Notice Nearby keeps the death date so September 25 remembers the Alabama lawyer who carried that fight to the marble courtroom.

Services

Died in Bethesda, Maryland, September 25, 1971. U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice 1937-1971; former U.S. Senator from Alabama.

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