

I was one of those who in the summer of 1964 taught in a program for incoming freshman set up at Tuskegee. In 2019, a friend of mine who's lived in Jamaica Plain for years but grew up in Birmingham, ALA led a 10-day tour of the South I went on. The trip was focused on civil rights. We went through Montgomery, so I arranged a visit to Myron Thompson's court.

He recalled our summer of 1964 and how much it meant to him, and how we encouraged him, a high-schooler, to go to Harvard (me) and Yale (Jim Tripp). Also how I took him to his first Broadway play when he visited NYC late that summer.

Myron went to both Yale and YLS, which honored him as alumnus of the year a few years ago.

He succeeded the great Frank Johnson (whom Mark Schantz clerked for) on the US District Court in Montgomery in 1980, when he was just in his early 30s. Fred Gray, an older and more established civil rights lawyer, had been nominated first, but some kind of corruption was uncovered. So he stepped back, on the condition that Myron would be nominated, Myron told me. Myron told me he was initially reluctant to abandon his practice and become a judge; but his mother told him he had to accept the nomination; this was too important an opportunity to pass up.

Myron has issued a number of significant decisions. Recently, he threw out restrictions Alabama tried to impose on abortion.

Clifford Durr, a patrician white lawyer from Montgomery, who did a lot in civil rights, and his wife Virginia did a lot to support Myron. When I saw Myron in 2019, he came to supper with us, and remembered humorously speaking at an event Virginia sponsored on Martha's Vineyard, and was quite proud of himself because she asked him to speak even though Art Buchwald was there. And of asking him to come and sit next to her, and ignoring his wife Ann who was quietly serving coffee in the kitchen.

Myron is good friends with Bryan Stevenson, who founded the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, and who was responsible for the lynching memorial and slavery museum there.

Also from Tuskegee, I remember that Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on July 2, and that shortly thereafter we formed an integrated group to go into Montgomery to a restaurant. We chose a restaurant which was a modern motel. We had no trouble, and were served like everyone else, but, apparently, Hardy now tells me, later he learned that it had always been integrated, no doubt because it was part of a national chain.