



Who was J. Franklyn Bourne?

J. Franklyn Bourne, Jr.

March 17, 1917 -- June 12, 1972

The Circuit Court for Prince George's County Welcomes All - A Fair Forum for Justice

Judge of the District Court of Maryland for Prince George's County

Our summer home pool is name in memoriam of Judge Bourne. We often get questions asking who he was. We have been utilizing the J. Franklyn Bourne pool since 1994. It is also known as the "Z" pool because of it's shape.

The District Court wing of the Upper Marlboro courthouse is dedicated to the memory of the Honorable James Franklyn Bourne, Jr., one of the original judges of the District Court for Prince George's County, and the first African-American judge to serve on that court.

Judge Bourne was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey on March 24, 1917, graduated with honors from Boys High School of Brooklyn, and graduated from Lincoln University in 1940. He entered Dickinson Law School in Pennsylvania in 1940, but soon left to join the United States Coast Guard, where he served from 1942 to 1945.

Judge Bourne earned his law degree at Howard University Law School in June, 1948, and was admitted to the Maryland Bar that fall. He then opened his first law office in Baltimore.

In the early 1950's, Judge Bourne moved his practice to Prince George's County, becoming the first African American attorney with a law office in the county. In 1957, he partnered with James H. Taylor to form a new law firm in Fairmont Heights. The Honorable James H. Taylor was the first African-American Assistant State's Attorney for Prince George's County, the first African-American member of the Prince George's County Bar Association, and the first African American judge to serve on the Circuit Court for Prince George's County.

While practicing law, Judge Bourne served as president and general counsel of the Prince George's County chapter of the NAACP. In 1969, Governor Spiro Agnew appointed Judge Bourne, a Republican, as the first African American to serve as chairman of the Maryland Workmen's Compensation Commission (now the Worker's Compensation Commission), a quasi-judicial administrative agency. In 1970, Governor Marvin Mandel, a Democrat, reappointed Judge Bourne to that position.

In July, 1971, Governor Mandel appointed Judge Bourne to serve on the newly-created District Court of Maryland. Judge Bourne was one of the seven original judges of the

District Court for Prince George's County, a group that included his good friend, Judge Howard Chasanow (who later served on the Circuit Court and Maryland Court of Appeals); Judges Robert Woods and James M. Rea, who later served on the Circuit Court); and Judges Thomas Brooks, James Koch and Edgar Smith.

Judge Bourne died suddenly on June 12, 1972, succumbing to a massive heart attack. In 1977, attorneys in Prince George's and Montgomery counties formed the J. Franklyn Bourne Bar Association to promote legal excellence, community service, and the advancement of African-Americans in the legal profession, as a living memorial to Judge Bourne. And, in 1991, the Upper Marlboro courthouse opened, with a new District Court wing dedicated to Judge Bourne.