



**Albert E. Jenner, Jr.** was born in Chicago on June 20, 1907. The son of a Chicago policeman, he grew up in Canaryville, the old Chicago stockyards neighborhood. Described as the boy wonder of law early in his profession, Jenner's legal career spanned five decades and included appointments to presidential, congressional and U.S. Supreme Court committees. He died on September 18, 1988, at age 81. He traced his interest in the law back to a rainy day when he was ten years old and found himself up in his attic. After inspecting a tattered copy of a text on the common law, the young Jenner knew that he was going to become a lawyer.

Jenner earned his undergraduate degree in 1929, and he then enrolled in the College of Law, where he earned a membership in the Order of the Coif, a high academic honor. Jenner received his law degree in 1930. He helped pay his way through college as a professional boxer, fighting six-round matches at \$50 each. He was also circulation manager at the Daily Illini, later marrying Nadine Newbill, a reporter from the student newspaper. In 1933, he joined the firm of Poppenhausen, Johnston, Thompson and Cole, precursor to the firm of Jenner & Block. He was admitted to partnership in the firm in January of 1939.

From 1964 to 1975, Jenner was chairman of the U.S. Supreme Court Advisory Committee on the Rules of Evidence for the United States Courts; and from 1960 to 1970, he was a member of the High Court's Advisory Committee on Federal Rules of Civil Procedure for the United States District Courts.

Jenner was a member of the Presidential National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, which investigated causes of violence surrounding the assassination of Sen. Robert Kennedy. Jenner also served as senior counsel to the Warren Commission, which

investigated the 1963 assassination of President John Kennedy. In 1951, President Truman appointed Jenner to serve on the National United States Loyalty Review Board, and, in 1963, he was Senior Counsel for the Presidential Commission to Investigate the Assassination of President Kennedy. In 1968, President Johnson appointed Jenner to serve on the National Commission of the Causes and Prevention of Violence in the United States.

In 1973 and 1974, Jenner was appointed by Republicans to be the Chief Minority Counsel to the House Judiciary Committee, which was investigating whether former President Nixon should be impeached. He recommended that Nixon should be impeached. He also took pride in the fact that, after a lengthy and bitter battle, he blocked Senator Edward Kennedy's nomination of an obscure Boston Municipal Court judge for a federal judgeship.

Bert Jenner served as a director of General Dynamics Corporation, and was a member and past co-chairman of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. He was the author of numerous legal publications in the fields of trial practice, evidence, pleading and procedure.

Illinois Governor James Thompson spoke for many when he stated, at the memorial service conducted in Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago, for Albert E. Jenner, Jr.: when "the soul of our nation was torn by the assassination of a president, our nation reached out to Bert Jenner. And when the fabric of our Constitution was threatened by the actions of a president, our nation reached out to Bert Jenner. When the wounds were deep and grievous for all Americans, when some impoverished soul was threatened, when some unpopular cause would have been extinguished but for the bravery and perseverance of that man, they all reached out for Bert Jenner."

By the early 1940's, Jenner had earned a reputation as an outstanding litigator, a reputation he maintained until his death. In an interview with the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*, Chief Judge William Bauer of the Court

of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, described his good friend as "one of the greatest lawyers I ever met. He tried cases in front of me; and boy, he was great. He was superbly prepared. He was always respectful but never deferential. He always knew what he was doing. He looked about 9-feet tall. He conducted himself as absolutely civil to an opponent, but he never gave anything away. He conducted a hard fight but a fair fight."

Jenner was committed from the beginning to the defense of accused criminals and to the use of his ability in the practice of law to help those in need. Though he argued many cases in the United States Supreme Court, Jenner considered [Witherspoon v. Illinois](#), 391 U.S. 510, 88 S.Ct. 1770, 20 L.Ed.2d 776 (1968), his most important case. The United States Supreme Court overturned the death sentence of William Witherspoon because the state excluded those potential jurors who had expressed reservations about the death penalty.

Judge Bauer recalled that Jenner demanded of others the same commitment to pro bono work that he demanded of himself. Bauer remembered that at regular meetings, "attorneys had to tell what they did on behalf of the profession, not just for the firm. If they hadn't done anything for the profession, he didn't want to hear what they'd done for the firm." Jenner practiced what he preached. He was an author of the first Illinois Civil Practice Act. He was Chairman of the U.S. Supreme Court Advisory Committee directed to draft the Federal Rules of Evidence and a member of the Supreme Court Advisory Committee responsible for revising the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. In addition, Jenner was a permanent member of the Editorial Board of the Uniform Commercial Code.

Bert was not just an awesome legal talent. His daughter, C. Lee Jenner, fondly remembers a family man and loving father with a great sense of humor and a lighter side. As the young President of the Illinois State Bar Association he joined the chorus of the annual Christmas Sprits show, clad in fishnet tights and tutu, with a grapefruit bosom and baton. At an ABA Convention one could see Jenner and Barney Sears

belting out Irish ditties off key — way off key — while their mortified wives hid in the lady's room.

Jenner's renowned commitment to the legal profession was also illustrated by his extraordinary involvement in professional associations. He was either a founding member, a charter member, or an officer in nearly every major legal organization. He was the youngest attorney ever to serve as president of Illinois State Bar Association, and was president of the American Judicature Society, the American College of Trial Lawyers, the National Conference of Bar Presidents, and the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws.

At age twenty-seven, Jenner was the youngest attorney to serve on the Chicago Bar Association's Board of Managers. Jenner was a founding member of the World Peace Through Law Center and was a member of the Board of Governors for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. He was a member and a national co-chairman of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, which President Kennedy created in 1963.

Albert Jenner was a charter member of the Board of Governors for the Bar Association of the Seventh Federal Circuit. In 1931, Jenner was chairman of the first Young Lawyers' Committee for the Chicago Bar Association. He was a member of the Board of Governors of the [American Bar Association](#), and served on eleven other committees of the ABA, including being a charter member of the ABA Young Lawyers Division in 1933, and a member of the ABA House of Delegates for thirty-five years.

In recognition of his lifetime achievement and his devotion to his alma mater, the University presented him in 1962 with the University of Illinois Distinguished Alumni Award, and 1981, the College of Law awarded him an Honorary L.L.D. Jenner also received the University of Illinois Award for Longstanding Service to the Legal Profession and Community in 1980.

Jenner dedicated himself to higher education in general, and legal

education in particular. Jenner's involvement with the University of Illinois since his graduation was extensive. In addition to defending the University of Illinois on occasion, he was a member of the University of Illinois Foundation, was chosen an Illini Achievement Award winner in 1966 and was awarded an honorary doctorate in 1981. He was involved with the University of Illinois Foundation, and the University of Illinois President's Council. He served as counsel for the *University of Illinois Law Forum*, the precursor to the [\*University of Illinois Law Review\*](#), and was a member of the Dean's Club of the College of Law. Jenner also served as Hearing Officer in a trial of students who participated in University of Illinois Campus Riots in 1969. He was a member of the re-accreditation committee of the University of Minnesota Law School and was instrumental in getting a state and university commitment for a new law building there.

His dedication to the College led him to provide funds to endow the Albert E. Jenner, Jr. Professorship in Law in 1982, and to fund two more professorships through his estate, one in honor of former Dean Albert James Harno and one in honor of Professor Emeritus Edward Cleary.