



***United States Bankruptcy Court  
Southern District of New York***

Cecelia G. Morris  
*Chief Judge*

Vito Genna  
*Clerk of Court*  
212-668-2892

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DISTINGUISHED NEW YORK BANKRUPTCY JUDGE DECEASED**

The Honorable Cornelius Blackshear, beloved judge of the Southern District of New York Bankruptcy Court, has died. He was 81.

Judge Blackshear has a long and notable career in law since graduating from high school in 1957.

In 1959 he enlisted in the US Navy and was honorably discharged after serving his tour of duty. Upon his discharge he joined the NYPD and while working there attended John Jay College of Criminal Justice (Cum Laude 1971) and Fordham Law School (1977).

Judge Blackshear served 16 distinguished years at the NYPD before being appointed in 1979 as Assistant U.S. Trustee for the Southern District of New York. Just 4 years later, he became the first Black American to be appointed as a U.S. Trustee.

Judge Blackshear represented the U.S. Trustee program in the 1982 case of manufacturer Johns-Manville, the largest company to ever seek bankruptcy at that time. That case, prompted by thousands of lawsuits alleging asbestos-related illnesses, made history for resolving the asbestos claims through the creation of a \$2.5 billion trust to pay out victims.

On Nov. 25, 1985, he was sworn in as a U.S. bankruptcy judge for the Southern District of New York. Judge Blackshear presided over many of the largest federal bankruptcies before the SDNY during the 1980s and 1990's. These included Pan Am, Alexander's Department Stores, 47th Street Photo, Inc., The Wiz, Federated Department Stores, and Iridium Spiegel, among others. He also presided over high-profile bankruptcy filings by Bernhard Goetz and LaToya Jackson.





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“Judge Blackshear had a big heart,” said Chief Judge Cecelia G. Morris, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, SDNY. “He was willing to give his time to so many different people. He was deeply engaged with all the people who came before him in court, and he was gracious and kind to everybody at the courthouse. He was very popular with all the court’s employees. He was always encouraging people to be bold and to strive to attain challenging goals. He was a delightful person.” Judge Blackshear retired to Hephzibah, GA in April 2005.