

WASHINGTON LETTER

by Trude B. Feldman
ISRAELITE'S White House Correspondent

ABE FORTAS, associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was nominated last week by President Lyndon B. Johnson to succeed Earl Warren as Chief Justice. If his nomination is confirmed by the Senate, Fortas will become the first man of the Jewish faith to serve as Chief Justice.

58th birthday last week, was born in Memphis, Tennessee. His father was a cabinetmaker. At age 13, Abe captivated audiences when he played the violin. And to this very day, the Justice uses the instrument -- with professional skill -- to entertain friends.

Fortas, who will be the 15th jurist to fill the country's top judicial office, has

been a personal friend of President Johnson for thirty years. He has also been the President's legal adviser, both on a personal and administrative level.

On July 28, 1965, President Johnson appointed him to the highest court of the land to fill the seat of former Justice Arthur Goldberg. It was Mr. Johnson's first appointee to the court. Prior to that appointment, Mr. Fortas had told the President that he would not be an applicant, for a candidate, or would not accept any appointment to any public office.

"This is as it should be," said Mr. Johnson, "for in this instance, the job has sought the man."

Of Abe Fortas, the President observed: "For many, many years, I have regarded Abe Fortas as one of this Nation's most able, and most respected, and most outstanding citizens -- a scholar, a profound thinker, a lawyer of superior ability, and a man of humane and deeply compassionate feelings toward his fellow man -- a champion of our liberties." The President added that his opinion is shared by the legal profession and by the Bar of this country, by members of the Congress and by the leaders of business, and labor and other sectors of our national life.

Abe Fortas received his Bachelor's degree at Southwestern College in Memphis and his law degree from Yale University. During the years of 1933 through 1946, he was

Assistant Professor of Law at Yale, Assistant Director and Consultant at Securities & Exchange Commission; and then, at the Department of Interior, he was (1) General Counsel, (2) Director of the Division of Power and (3) Undersecretary of the Interior. From 1946 until 1965, when he was appointed to the Court, Mr. Fortas practiced law in the District of Columbia, and had been considered one of the most successful lawyers in the country. He has also been praised as a champion of civil rights and of civil liberties.

His wife, Carolyn Eugenia Agger, is chief of the Tax Division of Fortas's former law firm (now Arnold & Porter), and is one of Washington's leading tax attorneys.

Among the many audiences recently addressed by Fortas were Bar Ilan University, the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Hebrew Academy of Washington. At the Hebrew Academy's banquet last year, Abe Fortas presented one of their Patron's with a special plaque. The honoree was Fortas's friend, David Lloyd Kreeger, vice chairman of the board of Government Employees Insurance Co.

Justice Warren, 77, who is retiring after 15 years as Chief Justice, praised Fortas's nomination and called him an 'able and experienced Jurist'. Mr. Warren added that Fortas is a scholar, an administrator and a great lawyer, "who I know will be a great Chief Justice."

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