

SPECIAL SALE | 12 WEEKS FREE

Police: Blood-stained clothing of missing New Canaan mother Jennifer...



House approves state budget that would increase cost of alcohol, plastic bag...



Michelle Troconis, jet-setting businesswoman lived openly with Fotis.

BREAKING NEWS

Ellen Bree Burns, first female federal judge in Connecticut, dies at 95

By ZACH MURDOCK
HARTFORD COURANT | JUN 03, 2019



Retired Judge Ellen Bree Burns, left, was sworn in as the state's first Superior Court judge by Gov. Ella Grasso in 1974 and Burns later became the state's first female federal judge in 1978. Burns died Monday. She was 95. (Hartford Courant)

SPECIAL SALE

MEMORIAL DAY SALE
12 FREE weeks, ends 6/3

SAVE NOW

system in the 1970s on her path to become the first female federal judge in the state in 1978.

Burns died Monday afternoon. She was 95.

After almost 40 years on the federal bench, she will be remembered as a talented jurist and even kinder person, U.S. Attorney John Durham said late Monday night.

"Judge Burns was the finest of jurists and a wonderful person," Durham said. "Her passing is cause for true sadness for all those who had the good fortune to appear before her in her magnificent courtroom. She will be greatly missed by all who were blessed to have known her."

Born in Hamden in 1923, Burns grew up in the New Haven area and graduated from Albertus Magnus College before graduating from Yale Law School in 1947.

She worked in the Connecticut General Assembly's Legislative Legal Services office as an attorney for almost 25 years before she was among the first women appointed to the state's then circuit court, said Joseph Burns, her oldest son who also is an attorney.

She then became the first woman judge appointed to the Court of Common Pleas and then the Superior Court before being appointed by President Jimmy Carter as the first female federal judge in Connecticut in May 1978.

"I'm not sure she would even consider herself a 'feminist,' but she was very proud of what she and her contemporaries did and she was very encouraging of young women who were in the law," Joseph Burns said. "She was always very happy to see other women achieve positions of significance."

[\[Breaking News\] I-84 west reopens in East Hartford after fiery early morning wreck kills 2, shuts down highway »](#)

Burns served on the federal bench for almost 40 years, including as chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut from 1988 through 1992, until she retired — at 91 — in March 2015.

SPECIAL SALE

MEMORIAL DAY SALE

12 FREE weeks, ends 6/3

Burns is survived by her children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Her late husband, Joseph P. Burns, died in 1982.

Funeral arrangements have not yet been scheduled, her family said late Monday night.

“She truly was a role model for so many women judges and attorneys who frankly looked up to her,” Joseph Burns said. “I’m not trying to brag about that, but I’ve been told that so many times by so many prominent attorneys and other judges. My mom was not someone who went around and tooted her own horn, but obviously we were very proud of her.”

Zach Murdock can be reached at zmurdock@courant.com.

LATEST

BREAKING NEWS

Ellen Bree Burns, first female federal judge in Connecticut, dies at 95

JUN 3, 2019



BREAKING NEWS

I-84 west reopens in East Hartford after fiery early morning wreck kills 2, shuts down highway

JUN 3, 2019



BREAKING NEWS

Police: Blood-stained clothing of missing New Canaan mother Jennifer Dulos found in Hartford trash cans, records show husband's phone was in the area night she disappeared

JUN 3, 2019



BREAKING NEWS

Suspect in fatal Bloomfield attack arrested after he tried to shoplift in Stamford, police say

JUN 3, 2019



BUSINESS

Looming trial over Hartford's minor league ballpark has high stakes for city, fired developer



SPECIAL SALE

MEMORIAL DAY SALE

12 FREE weeks, ends 6/3

Sign up for our newsletters

Subscribe for unlimited access

[Classifieds](#)

[Place an Ad](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Terms of Service](#)

[About Our Ads](#)

[About Us](#)

[BestReviews](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

Copyright © 2019, Hartford Courant

SPECIAL SALE

MEMORIAL DAY SALE

12 FREE weeks, ends 6/3