



Sixth Judicial District Court

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Courtroom dedicated to Magistrate Judge Y.B. Morales

BAYARD – The main courtroom in the Grant County Magistrate Court in Bayard has been dedicated to Judge Y.B. Morales, the community's first magistrate judge.

Family, friends, members of the community, active and retired judges, and previous coworkers - nearly 60 people - filled the courtroom during a ceremony earlier this month to honor Judge Morales for his devoted service to the people of New Mexico and enduring contribution to justice.

“Providing quality legal services in our rural communities is essential, and Judge Morales, you met that need with unwavering dedication for over four decades,” said Sixth Judicial District Chief Judge Jarod K. Hofacket. “The fact that folks in this room and all over the community still share stories about you says everything about the honesty, integrity, and heart you brought to the job.”

Judge Morales’ judicial career started in 1963 when he served as justice of the peace in Bayard. In 1968, the state magistrate court system was created with part-time magistrates, and a court was established in Bayard. Judge Morales was elected in 1968 and worked half-time as a magistrate judge for many years and eventually three-quarter time – all while continuing to work full time at local copper mines. Judge Morales became a full time magistrate judge in 1984, retiring from his mining job the same year. Judge Morales retired from the bench on Dec. 31, 2006.

“It has been my privilege to serve this community for forty-four years,” said Judge Morales. “I am grateful for all the experiences and people that taught me to serve with fairness, justice and dignity for everyone.”

At the ceremony, Judge Morales recalled his introduction to the justice of the peace system when he returned to Bayard from Ft. Bliss for his first daughter’s baptism in 1950. He and his “compadre” ran out of gasoline one night. He left his friend in the car and walked to Bayard for

gas. When he returned, his friend was gone and the car was about to be towed. Judge Morales learned that his friend had been accused of running a deputy's car off the road and had been arrested for DWI. The next day, Judge Morales went to Silver City and tried unsuccessfully before the judge to secure his friend's release from jail before going back to Ft. Bliss.

"So, 13 years later, in 1963, I was appointed justice of the peace by the Grant County Commissioners. In that moment, I now had the same power as the Silver City judge in 1950," said Judge Morales. "I decided then that if it wasn't fair, it wasn't justice. From that first day on that is the way I treated everyone, equal and fair."



(l-r) Grant County Magistrate Court-Division I (Silver City) Magistrate Judge D. Matthew Runnels, retired District Judge V. Lee Vesely, former District Judge Manuel D.V. Saucedo, District Judge Tom Stewart, retired Magistrate Judge Y.B. Morales, District Judge Jim Foy, District Judge Jennifer E. DeLaney, Chief District Judge Jarod K. Hofacket, and Grant County Magistrate Judge-Division II (Bayard) Magistrate Judge Hector C. Grijalva. Photo credit: Trial Court Administrative Assistant Katrina Marquez.

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