

Samuel E. Ericsson
Venice High School Graduate, S'62
An updated Biography
By Marilyn McClellan, wife of Charles McClellan, 1952

Samuel Eric Hans Ericsson, born in Sweden on Sept. 4, 1944, emigrated at age 8 with his family to the U.S. on Feb. 11, 1953. In later years he fondly remembered sighting the Statue of Liberty as their ship entered New York harbor. Known as Sam Ericsson at Venice High School, he was the first Chief Justice of the Student Court in 1961. Sam was Student Body President in 1962 the year he graduated. He earned his BA in Political Science at USC in 1966, and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1969.

From 1969-1981 Ericsson was Partner in the law firm of Lyman & Prince in Los Angeles where he processed anti-trust litigation. He was Executive Pastor of the Grace Community Church in Los Angeles from 1977-1981. Ericsson was co-author of the book "Battle for Religious Liberty" published by David C. Cook on 1981.

Ericsson, his wife Bobby, and their young children moved to Virginia in 1981. Ericsson became Director, Center for Law and Religious Freedom of the Christian Legal Society and served from 1981-1985. In these years he participated in over 50 U.S. Supreme Court briefs on church-state issues while acting as Executive Director, Christian Legal Society, whose motto is "Doing Justice with Compassion." He was Editor-in-Chief of the Religious Freedom Reporter from 1985 to 1991.

In 1991 Ericsson founded the Advocates International located in Springfield, Virginia. He became its President and CEO and served in this position until his death at age 66 on Jan. 21, 2011 in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia.

During the 20 years of his leadership of Advocates International, Ericsson's legal work on behalf of persecuted religious believers brought him much satisfaction and numerous awards. He visited over 60 nations and addressed the U.N. Commission of Human Rights. He became a Fellow of the International Academy for the Defense of Religion and Belief and was Founder and President of the Rule for Law Forum, serving the U.N. diplomatic community. For the remainder of his life Ericsson developed an international network of lawyers, judges, and national leaders linking 135 nations focused on religious freedom, human rights, conflict resolution, and professional ethics.

Ericsson earned many honors for his work including a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Christian Legal Society in 2000. That same year Trinity International University awarded him an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree as well as the Abraham Lincoln Leadership Award.

A memorial service for Ericsson was held at the Immanuel Bible Church in Springfield, Virginia on Feb. 5, 2011. The Sam Ericsson Memorial Fund for Religious Freedom has been set up through the auspices of the Christian Legal Society.