

## Joseph S, McDuffie

### *Law*

Joseph “Mac” McDuffie was born on August 12, 1917, in Lower Peach Tree, Alabama, the ninth of ten children of Willie and Mary Bryant McDuffie. McDuffie attended public school in St. Louis, Missouri after graduating from Vashon High School, he volunteered for the U.S. Navy. After an honorable discharge from the Navy, McDuffie came to Lincoln as a student in 1936, where he majored in economics and minored in history and government.

McDuffie was an active undergraduate student who was a campus leader while at Lincoln. Mac was President of the campus Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), business manager of the LU Archives, treasurer of the Alpha Psi chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and a star member of the junior and senior intramural football championship teams. After his 1940 graduation from Lincoln with AB degree, McDuffie enrolled in Lincoln’s School of Law located in St. Louis, Missouri. He continued his leadership role by serving as president of the Law Students’ Association, and in 1949 was selected as a member of the Lincoln University Law School faculty. He was later made a professor of law, a position he served in until Lincoln University closed its law school in 1955.

In 1955, Joseph McDuffie practiced law in St. Louis, Missouri. McDuffie’s practice lasted more than 40 years until he retired in the late 1980s. Joseph McDuffie and his law partner, William P. Russell establish a firm which specialized in constitutional and employment discrimination law. Mr. McDuffie was active in many civil rights cases. In the early 1960s, McDuffie was among the attorneys who served as legal counsel for the defendants of the Jefferson Bank demonstrations. In the early 1970s, he and his partner, William P. Russell, represented Minnie Liddell in the St. Louis Board of Education desegregation case, which started the Voluntary Inter-district Desegregation Program. The case, Liddell vs. St. Louis Board of Education, resulted in the federal court-directed plan desegregating St. Louis and County public schools. In the early 1980s, McDuffie and his law partner, William Russell represented employees of the old Homer G Phillips Hospital in an unsuccessful attempt to reopen the facility, and also represented the St. Louis Teacher Union in negotiations with the school board.

As an indication of the respect and high esteem in which Joseph McDuffie was held by other attorneys, McDuffie was elected president of the Mound city Bar Association in 1966-1968. The Mound City Bar Association in one of the oldest black associations west of the Mississippi River. It was organized as the St. Louis Negro Bar Association on January 13, 1922, shortly after the World War. Joseph McDuffie also served two terms as a member and President of the Board of Curators for Lincoln University.