Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall today announced he is appointing H. Edward Hyden, an Interior Department lawyer specializing in American Indian affairs for 26 years, to be Chief Justice of American Samoa.

Mr. Hyden, Associate Solicitor for Indian Affairs since 1957, will succeed Judge Arthur A. Morrow, Who became Chief Justice of the territory in the South Pacific in 1937, the year before Mr. Hyden received his law degree.

Judge Morrow is retiring October 16. In August, 1963, he reached his 70th birthday, normally the mandatory retirement age for Federal civilian employees, but agreed to the Department's request that he remain with the territorial court as a reemployed annuitant.

Governor H. Rex Lee of American Samoa has asked Judge Morrow to remain in the territory and serve with the territorial government on a part-time basis. Governor Lee added that he hoped Judge Morrow will also conduct a part-time private law practice, at least until some of the Samoan students now studying law receive their degrees and return home to practice.

Judge Morrow was dean of the College of Law at Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa, when he was appointed Chief Justice of American Samoa, then under Navy jurisdiction. In 1942 he returned to the University as dean of its Law College when the Navy decided that wartime conditions made it necessary for a Naval officer to preside over the court. From May, 1943, to October, 1945, he also served as, compliance commissioner in the Des Moines area for the War Production Board. In 1946 he returned to preside over the court in American Samoa.

Mr. Hyden, who still calls Oklahoma his home, received his bachelor of laws degree in 1938 and his master of laws degree the following year from Columbus University, now Catholic University, Washington, D. C.

He entered Federal service in April, 1935, and in 1939 was assigned to the Interior Department's Solicitor's Office as an Indian affairs attorney. He was a major contributor to the Department's 1958 publication, Federal Indian Law, a leading textbook on the subject. He is a member of the bar in the District of Columbia, Oklahoma, and South Carolina, and is a member of the Oklahoma, Federal and American Bar Associations.

Secretary Udall said Mr. Hyden's years of experience in dealing closely with rapidly-changing social and economic conditions among people whose culture is different from the average American's will be important in his new post in American Samoa.

American Samoa is one of the areas administered by the Interior Department's Office of Territories. It comprises the seven eastern islands of the Samoan group, approximately 2,300 miles southwest of Hawaii and 1600 miles northeast of the northern tip of New Zealand. The population is approximately 22,000.

The people of American Samoa are American nationals and represent one of the few remaining societies of Polynesians retaining the major part of their traditional culture.

American Samoa was under the jurisdiction of the Navy, as a naval base, from 1900 until 1951, when it was transferred to the Department of the Interior.

Mr. and Mrs. Hyden, who now reside in Alexandria, Virginia, will leave for American Samoa in mid-October.

Earlier this week, Secretary Udall announced that Richmond F. Allan of Billings, Montana, will be the new Associate Solicitor for Indian Affairs, replacing Mr. Hyden.