



# City of Mercer Island, Washington

## *Proclamation*

**WHEREAS**, on July 31, 2022 William Fenton Russell, who was better known as Bill Russell, passed away.

Bill and his wife, Jeannine Russell, have been long-time residents of Mercer Island.

Bill lived a life full of remarkable accomplishments as a basketball player leading the University of San Francisco to back-to-back college championships (1955 and 1956), winning a gold medal with the United States Olympic basketball team in 1956, and leading the Boston Celtics to 11 National Basketball Association titles in a span of 13 years

Bill was a successful head coach in the NBA, including coaching the Seattle Supersonics from 1973 to 1977.

Bill was an individual who actively promoted and fought for civil rights including marching in 1963 with Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. in Washington D. C., speaking against desegregation in Boston public schools, supporting Muhammed Ali in Ali's opposition to the Vietnam War based upon his religious beliefs, and boycotting establishments that discriminated against Black players on the Boston Celtics.

Bill's commitment to civil rights was acknowledged in 2011 when President Barack Obama awarded Bill Russell the Presidential Medal of Freedom which is in recognition of people who have made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors..."

The ideals of equality, civility, and respect that Bill Russell lived by and fought for align with the values of the Mercer Island community that he called home for 40 years,

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Salim Nice, Mayor of the City of Mercer Island, do hereby proclaim:

September 6, 2022, as a day we, honor the memory of **William Fenton Russell (better known as Bill Russell)**, who was a long-time Mercer Island resident, for not only his legendary accomplishments as a basketball player and basketball coach, but more importantly for his life-long commitment to and advocacy for civil rights and social justice, and for being an inspiration to so many who followed his leadership.

**APPROVED**, this 6th day of September 2022

---

Mayor Salim Nice

Proclamation No. 295