



EX ANTE

OUR MISTAKE?

We started producing bobbleheads of Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003. In the early years, we set aside serial #1 of every bobblehead. Inside Green Bag World Headquarters, it was a joke: We told ourselves we were saving them for the day when the Smithsonian Institution would call us, inquiring about the possibility of adding our small ceramic portraits to the nation's collection of great art and important artifacts. It really was just a joke. It got stale. We stopped saving the #1s.

But we underestimated the kindness of the Justices (who have been consistently good-natured in their toleration of the bobbleheads) and the sensibilities of the bar (which seems to have relished the dolls' mix of light-hearted caricature and serious scholarly respect). And we could not have anticipated the generosity of Jane Ginsburg and James Ginsburg.

What about that generosity?

On March 30, 2022, the National Museum of American History hosted an online program honoring (alas, posthumously) Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg with the Museum's Great Americans Medal. (It was quite an event, which you can watch here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=078e1iYwPZI.) During the program, Museum Director Anthea Hartig talked with Justice Ginsburg's children – Jane Ginsburg and James Ginsburg – about some of the objects related to Justice Ginsburg's career that they were donating to the Museum. Lo and behold, one of the objects discussed – and pictured – was the bobblehead we had created of her almost exactly a decade earlier. It was, for us, a moment.

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Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Photo by Jaclyn Nash, courtesy of the National Museum of American History.

So, we had made a mistake. We'd assumed our work would never actually be worthy of the Smithsonian Institution (of which the National Museum of American History is a part). Though what we had really failed to consider, was that a proper portrayal of a great person sometimes takes on a little bit of greatness of its own.

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