

Chief Judge Joseph Lee Honored by William Carey University

May 12, 2014

Mississippi Court of Appeals Chief Judge L. Joseph Lee was recently inducted into the William Carey University Hall of Fame.

Chief Judge Lee, of Jackson, was among five outstanding graduates who were honored by the William Carey University Alumni Association at an awards dinner on April 25 at Southern Oaks House and Garden in Hattiesburg.

Other alumni inducted into the university's Hall of Fame were 1987 graduate Gerald C. "Jerry" Bracey, dean of the William Carey Traditional Campus; 1988 graduate Dr. Leo Day, dean of the School of Music at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; 1985 graduate W. Michael Hannaford of Frisco, Texas, vice-president of global product services for JCPenney; and 1956 graduate Dora Dunkley Harbin of Hattiesburg, a nurse and former missionary.

Chief Judge Lee earned a Bachelor of Science degree in social science at William Carey in 1969, and a law degree from the former Jackson School of Law, now Mississippi College School of Law, in 1973. His induction into the William Carey Hall of Fame is his fourth time to be recognized by universities he attended. Mississippi College School of Law selected him as Lawyer of the Year in 2004, and presented him with an Honorary Master of Laws in 2009. The University of Southern Mississippi, where he also studied, honored him with its Juris Sodalitas Distinguished Public Servant Award in 2007.

"I was deeply honored," said Chief Judge Lee. "I'm extremely proud of being an alumnus of William Carey. I received an excellent education there. I have vivid memories of classes and instructors. I am deeply appreciative to all the faculty, staff and alumni, especially those professors who instilled in me ethics and virtues that I live by today. I will always remain grateful and indebted to William Carey."

Judge Lee has served on the Court of Appeals for 16 years, and has been Chief Judge since March 3, 2011. As chief judge, he deals with budgetary and other administrative responsibilities for the 10-member court, in addition to his work deciding appeals. Under his leadership, the Court of Appeals has never missed a deadline for deciding a case within the 270-day time frame set by statute and by court rule. He expanded the Court of Appeals' education outreach, increasing the number of college campuses to host the "Court on the Road." In addition to hearing oral arguments in cases in their Jackson courtroom, panels of judges convene periodically on college campuses and at other locations to give students and the public an opportunity to learn about the work of the appellate court. William Carey University hosted Court on the Road for the first time in spring 2013.

Judge Lee taught business law at William Carey as an adjunct instructor for four years. He has served as a judge in moot court competitions and mentored students at both Mississippi law schools for many years.

He served as a member of the Criminal Rules Study Committee for six and one-half years drafting a proposed set of uniform criminal rules for the state. He is and has been a frequent speaker at numerous legal seminars.

He is a member of the National Council of Chief Judges of Courts of Appeal, the Mississippi Bar, the Texas Bar, the American Bar Association and the Charles Clark American Inn of Court.

He was born in Poplarville and grew up in Lamar County. He attended Purvis schools and graduated from Lumberton High School. Beginning in 1962 during high school, and later as an undergraduate, he supported himself and his family by working in the funeral home industry. He taught junior high and high school, and served as interim principal.

Judge Lee began practicing law in Jackson in 1973. In 1975, he bought funeral homes in

Jackson and Pearl. He operated the funeral homes for many years while also practicing law.

Judge Lee is married to the former Renee Simon. He has two sons, Larry Joseph "Joey" Lee Jr. (wife Julie), a fire fighter on the Jackson Fire Department, and Judson Morgan Lee, an attorney in Madison; a step-daughter, Elaina Walker, a teacher in Metarie, Louisiana; and two grandsons, Garrett Lee and Steven Lee.

Judge Lee and his wife Renee worship at St. Paul's Catholic Church, where he serves as an usher and greeter.

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