

# Mississippi Courts

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## Librarian finds 225-year-old records of Mississippi Territory



Presiding Justice Jim Kitchens, at left, and State Librarian Stephen Parks look at Territorial court minutes moments after attorney Freddie Rush delivered the books to the Supreme Court on March 27.

Records of the Supreme Court of the Mississippi Territory spanning 1799 to 1809 were discovered recently among thousands of

books slated for an estate sale in Vicksburg.

State Librarian Stephen Parks spotted listings of the books after a friend

sent him an advertisement for the estate sale. Presiding Justice Jim Kitchens requested that the two volumes, historic public rec-

ords, be turned over to the Court. Attorney Freddie Rush of Carrollton, executor of the estate which had the books, purchased them from the estate shortly before the scheduled sale and gave them to the Supreme Court.

When Rush delivered the books to the Supreme Court on March 27, Presiding Justice Kitchens said, "You have done a great thing and I really appreciate it." Rush replied, "I have done what I think needed to be done."

The books are, literally, pages out of history.

The 1805-1809 Minute Book of the Supreme Court of the Mississippi Territory documents early stages of the 1807 attempted prosecution of former Vice President Aaron Burr on treason charges. An entry dated Feb. 4, 1807, says that a grand jury found no reason to hold Burr. The document

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## Carole Murphey appointed Director of Mississippi Judicial College



Carole Murphey

Carole Murphey of Batesville has been appointed Director of the Mississippi Judicial College, University of Mississippi School of Law Dean Frederick G. Slabach announced on April 22.

With a remarkable tenure of 27 years within the MJC, Murphey brings a wealth of experience and expertise to her new position, the University said in

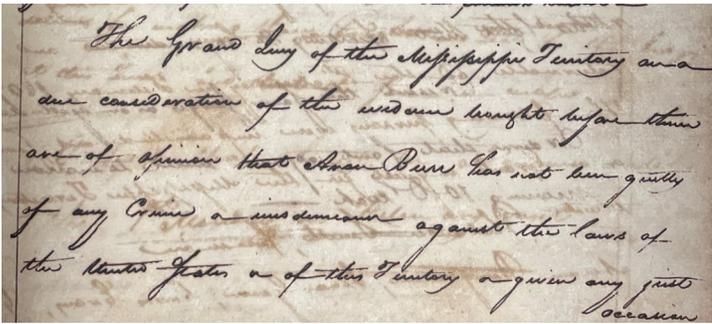
making the announcement. Murphey has been an integral part of MJC's success, previously serving as staff attorney and research counsel. Her leadership abilities were further demonstrated during her service as interim director since June 2023. In this capacity, she has effectively steered the MJC through a full program year, ensuring its continued success

and growth.

Randy Pierce, former MJC Director and former Supreme Court Justice, praised her leadership. "Carole Murphey will do an excellent job leading the Mississippi Judicial College. She has devoted her legal career to serving Mississippi judges and court-related personnel. During my tenure as Director of the Mississippi

*continued on page 3*

## Territorial Supreme Court Minutes recount Aaron Burr arrest, *continued from page 1*



Feb. 4, 1807, minute entry documents grand jury finding regarding former Vice President Aaron Burr prosecution.

reads, “The Grand Jury of the Mississippi Territory as a due consideration of the evidence brought before them are of opinion that Aaron Burr has not been guilty of any Crime or misdemeanor against the laws of the United States or of this territory or given any just occasion for the alarm....” An entry on the document from three days later, Feb. 7, 1807, records another proceeding in which Attorney General George Poindexter appeared before the Territorial Supreme Court and “moved that the defendant be called by the Sheriff, which was objected to by Lyman Harding Esquire one of the Securities of ... Aaron Burr for his appearance at this Term.” Penned in flowing script, the document says that Burr was “called but came not.” History records that Burr was arrested a few days later in what is now Alabama, then part of the Mississippi Territory. Burr was tried in Virginia on a charge of treason, and was acquitted.

“This is an historic treasure,” Presiding Justice Kitchens said. “It’s foundational in our legal system in Mississippi. Mississippi has long recognized the doctrine that courts can speak only through their

minutes. The content of these volumes provides a glimpse of the efforts of our judicial ancestors to establish the rule of law in what was to become the states of Mississippi and Alabama.”

The Mississippi Territory was created in 1798. Mississippi became a state in 1817, and Alabama, in 1819.

The 1799-1803 Minute Book of the Supreme Court of the Mississippi Territory, coverless and tattered, opens with a who’s who of territorial history, documenting that William McGuire, Chief Justice, and Peter Bryan Bruin, Second Judge, presented their commissions under the hand and seal of the President of the United States. The handwritten script, a corner of which is missing, reads, “At a Supreme Court held for the Mississippi Territory ... Town of Natchez in the County of Adams on ...twenty third day of September in the year of ...one thousand seven hundred and ninety nine ...The Honorable – William McGuire Chief Justice, and Peter Bryan Bruen (sic) second Judge, ...their commissions under the hand and seal of the President of the United states, the first as chief

Justice and the other as second Judge of the Mississippi Territory, and the court being opened in the usual form the same are read.”

The ragged brown opening page records Robert Stark’s oath as Clerk of the Supreme Court of the Territory and Lyman Harding’s oath as Attorney General, both having received commissions from the Governor. Another entry documents that Chief Justice William McGuire swore in the territorial governor on Sept. 23, 1799.

Judges of the Territorial Supreme Court had trial jurisdiction over serious crimes, appellate jurisdiction, and the power to convene the grand jury.

The second and third pages include a record of a what appears to be a grand jury report, though part of the page is missing. The record details the slaying of Jack, a slave, by Paul, another slave, who wielded an ax on May 6, 1799.

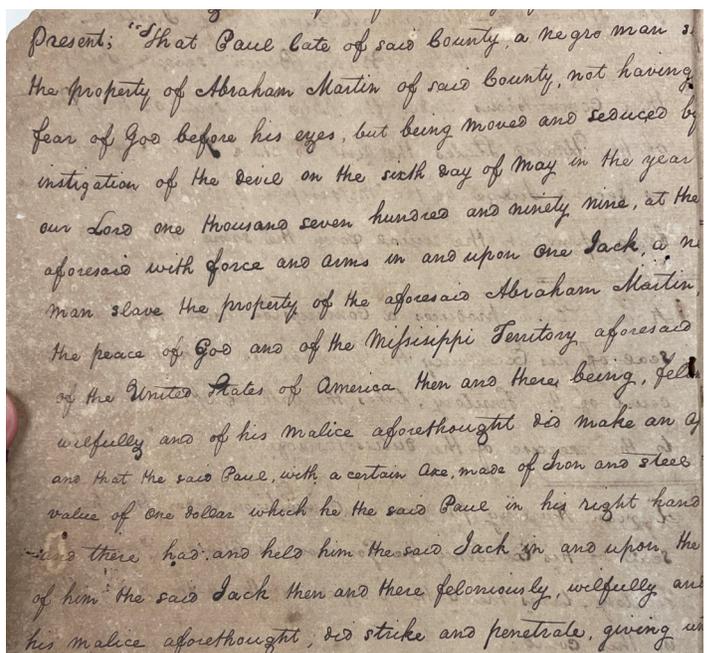
The record uses only their first names. The document records that the accused man “did kill and murder, against the form and effect of the statute in such case made, adopted and provided, and against the peace and dignity of the Mississippi Territory aforesaid, and of the United States of America.”

The third page notes the jurors’ finding “not a true bill” of indictment against another individual on a charge of murder, and an order of his release from jail in Adams County.

Page 3 notes that the Attorney General sought a show cause of why the Sheriff of Adams County should not face a fine because a prisoner charged with horse stealing escaped jail.

The 1799–1803 Minute Book is 121 pages; the 1805-1809 volume is 117 pages.

Parks said, “So little is known to us about the Territorial Court because our collection doesn’t extend



A 1799 entry describes a murder charge in the death of a slave.

## Judges of selection committee praise Murphey’s experience, leadership

*Continued from page 1*

Judicial College, Carole played a vital role in the successes that we achieved. No doubt, she is prepared to continue the excellent service the Mississippi Judicial College provides the State of Mississippi."

Madison County Court Judge Ed Hannan, who served on the search committee and is a member of the Mississippi Judicial College Board of Governors, congratulated Murphey and expressed excitement about working with her. "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Carole Murphey on her appointment as Director of the Mississippi Judicial College. I am confident that her leadership will continue to elevate the college's role within the Mississippi judicial community, and I look forward to working

with her."

Mississippi Court of Appeals Presiding Judge Virginia Carlton, who also serves on the Board of Governors and was a member of the search committee, said that Murphey's appointment "is a testament to her exemplary qualifications and dedicated service to the judiciary. Her extensive experience and commitment to excellence make her the ideal candidate to lead the college into the future."

Dean Slabach said, "Carole Murphey's appointment as Director of the Mississippi Judicial College is a testament to her outstanding contributions and leadership within the legal community.... We are confident that under her guidance, the College will continue to thrive and serve as a cornerstone of legal education and train-

ing for Mississippi judges and state court personnel."

Murphey said, "I am honored to have been selected as the Director of the Mississippi Judicial College. I will strive to ensure that the Mississippi Judicial College continues to provide the highest quality of education and training for the judiciary. I want to especially thank Dean Slabach for entrusting me with this position and the MJC staff for their dedication to our program."

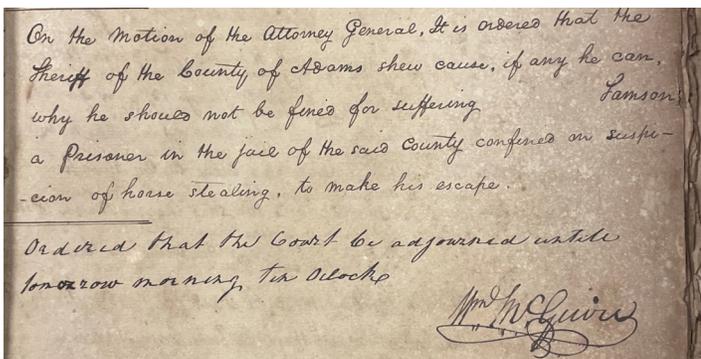
Murphey earned her Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1994, where she distinguished herself as a leader. She served on the editorial board of the *Mississippi Law Journal*, was Judicial Liaison of the Moot Court Board, and chaired the Honor Council.

In her new role, Mur-

phey is responsible for directing, coordinating and administering operations of the Judicial College. She will collaborate with Mississippi judges and court personnel to meet the needs of the judiciary.

The Mississippi Judicial College is a division of UM Law. Founded in 1970 by the late Judge Noah S. "Soggy" Sweat, the Judicial College became the first full-time state judicial education program in the country. The program provides continuing judicial education and training each year for about 1,400 judges and court personnel across the state, including Supreme Court justices; Court of Appeals judges; Chancery, Circuit, County, Justice and Municipal Court judges; Youth Court judges and referees; court administrators, court clerks and court reporters.

## Territorial Minutes, *continued from page 2*



The Attorney General takes issue with the Sheriff over a jail escape.

back that far. These are a primary source documenting the establishment of and the early proceedings of the legal system of this territory that became Mississippi. We are appreciative of Mr. Rush assisting us in obtaining these items. It's not often that items as rare as these come up for

sale, or even viewing."

The volumes were in the library of the late Lucius B. Dabney Jr. of Vicksburg, a sixth generation attorney whose family law firm began in 1794 in Virginia. The firm moved to Raymond in 1835, then to Vicksburg in 1885. Lucius Dabney joined the firm in

1949, and practiced law in Vicksburg until several years before his death on Aug. 11, 2022, at age 96. The firm is reportedly the oldest family-owned law firm in Mississippi.

Presiding Justice Kitchens said, "Mr. Dabney was an unforgettable character and I'm glad that I knew him."

Rush, who was friends with Lucius Dabney for 50 years, is executor of the Dabney estate. "It's been an interesting learning experience," he said. "I've learned a lot about Aaron Burr and his conspiracy trials."

It's unclear when or how Dabney acquired the Minute Books. Rush said that Dabney's father and

grandfather also were avid collectors. The collection included original documents signed by John Hancock and Alexander Hamilton, historic pictures and maps, Confederate currency and other Civil War relics. Alongside hundreds of volumes of law books were some rare books. The oldest volume, which was sold before the estate sale, was printed in 1496, in Latin.

Parks said that he hopes to make digital copies of the minute books, if that can be done without damaging them, and make the digital images available to the public via the internet. Access to the originals is restricted, as they are fragile.

## Court of Appeals Judge Jim Greenlee will retire June 30



**Judge Jim M. Greenlee**

Judge Jim M. Greenlee of Oxford recently announced that he will retire from the Mississippi Court of Appeals on June 30.

"I have been privileged to serve our people, our state and our system of justice in this position for over eight years," Judge Greenlee said in an April 1 letter to Gov. Tate Reeves. "Furthermore, it has been a privilege to serve with my fellow Judges and our staff at the Mississippi Court of Appeals."

The Governor will make an appointment to fill the vacancy. A special election is expected to be scheduled for November 2026.

Judge Greenlee said in a recent interview that he has enjoyed his work on the Court of Appeals. "It's been a great privilege and honor to be here and work on these cases," he said. "We are a Court that has to give our attention and focus on (appeals of) what occurred in the trial courts and the state agency administrative appeals."

The 10-member Court of Appeals issued 321 decisions on the merits in 2023, and decided 1,550 motions and petitions.

The Mississippi Senate commended Judge Greenlee's career, adopting Senate Resolution 80 honoring him on April 12. The resolution outlined his career and said, in part, "Judge Greenlee has served as a leader and mentor in the administration of justice in Mississippi, and consistently lectured on the professional standards of the practice, including ethics, integrity, civility, courtesy and adherence to the Golden Rule. Judge Greenlee's career has honored both the Mississippi Bar and this great state that he served."

Judge Greenlee has more than 42 years of government service, having served in the U.S. Navy and Naval Reserve, and as an Assistant U.S. Attorney and U.S. Attorney. President George W. Bush nominated him as U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Mississippi in 2001, and he was confirmed by the U.S. Senate. He served as U.S. Attorney until 2010, leading an office which prosecuted public corruption cases, judicial influence cases, major drug distribution networks and violent gun crime cases. The office under Judge Greenlee's leadership assisted in the cold case investigation of the murder of Emmett Till. As U. S. Attorney, he served on the Advisory Committee to the U.S. Attorney General.

He was an assistant U. S. Attorney in the Civil Division of the U. S. Attorney's Office from 1987 until 2001. He became the lead civil fraud attorney, trying bankruptcy, tort, employment rights, emi-

nent domain, and white-collar criminal cases.

He was in the private practice of law in Southaven from 1981 to 1987, and in Oxford from 2010 to 2016.

He grew up in Batesville and graduated from South Panola High School in 1970. Having been awarded a Navy ROTC Scholarship, he earned his Bachelor of Engineering degree from the University of Mississippi in 1974. He served on active duty in the U. S. Navy from 1974 to 1978, assigned to the destroyers USS Stribling and USS Jonas Ingram. He served as First Lieutenant, Gunnery Officer and Navigator at different times, and was qualified as a Surface Warfare Officer. After completing active duty, he returned to the University of Mississippi to study law, earning a Juris Doctor in 1981.

He continued his military service as a member of the U.S. Navy Reserve, commanding a Reserve Naval Intelligence Service unit, the forerunner of NCIS. He retired from the Navy Reserve in 1997 at the rank of Captain, USN.

Former Gov. Phil Bryant appointed Judge Greenlee to a vacancy on the Court of Appeals on Jan. 20, 2016, after former Court of Appeals Judge James D. Maxwell II of Oxford was appointed to the Supreme Court. Judge Greenlee was elected twice without opposition.

Judge Greenlee, 72, said that he looks forward to spending more time with his wife of 49 years, Ann Veazey Greenlee, and with their two children's families. They have four grandchildren.

"Ann and I would like to do some things together, and I just think it's time," he said.

## Judge Weathers will leave bench, return as counsel for USM



**Judge Jon Mark Weathers**

Circuit Judge Jon Mark Weathers of Hattiesburg will leave the bench April 30. He will return to his former position as counsel

to the University of Southern Mississippi on May 1.

In an April 1 letter to Gov. Tate Reeves, Judge Weathers said, "The time eventually comes to those holding public office to step aside in order to allow a younger person to assume his place of service. After much thought and prayer, I have concluded that now is the time for me to step aside from service in my present role."

Judge Weathers, 75, has 24 years of public service.

The Governor is expected to appoint a judge to the vacancy. A special

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# Judge Joel Smith will leave Court of Appeals in December



**Judge Joel Smith**

Court of Appeals Judge Joel Smith of Gulfport will leave the court at the end of his term in December. He is not seeking election.

Judge Smith said, “After nearly two and a half decades as a prosecutor and judge, I’ve decided it’s time for a new chapter and will be returning to the private sector following the completion of this term at the end of the year. It’s been the honor and privi-

lege of my professional life to serve the people of this great State for so many years, first as an Assistant DA, then as District Attorney and now on the Court of Appeals. I’m very thankful for the opportunity to work with a multitude of dedicated and hard-working people along my path.”

He said, “After lots of prayer and discussion with my family, I look forward to the next chapter and promise to stay involved in service to our community. Thank you to everyone who has given us support and help over the years.”

Gov. Tate Reeves appointed Judge Smith on Jan. 19, 2021, to the position previously held by Sean Tindell.

Before appointment to the bench, Judge Smith served for 20 years as a prosecutor in the Second Judicial District of Harrison, Hancock and Stone

counties. He was an assistant district attorney for 11 years. He was elected District Attorney in 2011 and took office in January 2012. He was in his third term as District Attorney when he was appointed to the bench. Smith practiced corporate defense and premises liability litigation with the firm of Bryant, Clark, Dukes & Blakeslee before joining the District Attorney’s office.

He is past president of the Mississippi Prosecutors Association, served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Prosecutors Section of the Mississippi Bar and was a member of the National District Attorneys Association. He served as vice-chair of the Mississippi Children’s Justice Act Task Force and was appointed by the Governor to serve on the Mississippi School Safety Task Force. He served on the Mississippi Correc-

tions and Criminal Justice Oversight Committee and on the Governor’s 2020 search committee to find a new commissioner for the Department of Corrections. He served as an instructor with the U.S. Navy Sexual Assault Intervention Training Program, the Southern Regional Public Safety Institute and the Harrison County Law Enforcement Academy.

He was President of the Leadership Gulf Coast Board of Trustees and a member of the Board of Directors of the Coast Chamber of Commerce. He was a member of the Gulf Coast Business Council.

He is a native of Gulfport and a graduate of Gulfport High School. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the University of Mississippi in 1996 and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1999.

## Judge Weathers, *continued from page 4*

election is expected to be set for November 2025.

Judge Weathers served as university counsel from Nov. 15, 2010, until he took office as 12<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Judge on Jan. 4, 2016. He was elected to the bench after a second circuit judgeship was created for Forrest and Perry counties.

“I came over here and set up a new position” for the court, Judge Weathers said. He recalled starting with a nearly empty office. His court administrator put up cardboard drawings where computers were to

go.

Now, “We have a state-of-the-art courtroom. The docket is in good shape. It’s just a good time to go and let the Governor appoint somebody younger.”

He said, “I love my job. I love the people I work with. I have the best staff anywhere. I’m going to miss them all. It’s just time to move on.”

He looks forward to returning to work at USM. “It was an opportunity that I didn’t think would ever come along again.”

He is a lifelong resident of Hattiesburg. He earned

an associate degree from Pearl River Community College. He is a 1970 graduate of USM. He earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1972.

He served twice as District Attorney of Forrest and Perry counties – 1976 to 1980 and again from July 2003 until November 2010.

In between, he was in private law practice for 23 years. He had mostly a civil practice.

### Free court interpreter seminar May 30-31

The Administrative Office of Courts seeks bilingual speakers willing to train and qualify as credentialed court interpreters. An Ethics and Skill Building Seminar will be held May 30-31 at the Gartin Justice Building in Jackson.

The registration deadline is May 24. Register at this link: <https://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/forms/Registration%20Form%20-%20May%202024.pdf>

For the first time, the seminar is free. A legislative appropriation to the AOC Court Interpreter Credentialing Program allows the program to be offered at no cost to participants for one time only.

## Judge Richelle Lumpkin pledges tireless efforts in service



Circuit Judge Richelle Lumpkin, at left, takes the oath of office as her husband Wendell holds the Bible during an investiture ceremony on March 25 at the Pearl River County Courthouse. Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike Randolph, at right, administers the oath. Gov. Tate Reeves, who appointed Judge Lumpkin to the court, is seated at left.

Recently appointed Circuit Judge Richelle Lumpkin of Carriere said that she will give her all, as her parents taught her, in service to the court and the people of the 15<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court District.

At her investiture ceremony on March 25, she said, “My promise to Governor Reeves and to every citizen in this 15th Circuit Court District is to be the best circuit judge that I can be, as I have been taught from my youth.”

She told the crowd that filled the Pearl River County Circuit Courtroom in Poplarville, “I pledge to continue to work tirelessly as a member of the judiciary and to fulfill my judicial role in a fair, impartial manner and administer justice equally to all. I also promise to uphold the rule of law and the Constitution of the State of Mississippi

and the Constitution of the United States of America. As I assume this important office, my prayer is that of the Psalmist: ‘Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law; Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.’”

Gov. Tate Reeves, who appointed Judge Lumpkin to the 15th Circuit Court, called her an “incredibly accomplished and successful judge.” He said, “Judge Lumpkin has my complete and total confidence. I know she will do an excellent job and I know she will make this entire community, her home, and this entire state proud.”

The Governor said, “I think we all know and it should be stated that Judge Lumpkin has big shoes to fill...We were all saddened by the passing of the Honorable Buddy McDonald. But I know that Judge

Lumpkin will fill this seat with the honor and distinction that is required.”

Chief Justice Mike Randolph gave Judge Lumpkin the charge to serve and administered the ceremonial oath. He recalled Judge McDonald, and noted that he swore in Judge McDonald in 2016.

Judge Lumpkin began hearing Circuit Court cases on Feb. 19. She took the oath of office before beginning work. It is customary for judges to take a ceremonial oath again during an investiture.

Chief Justice Randolph spoke about the importance of prayer and patriotism. The investiture ceremony began with prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance and singing of the National Anthem. The Mississippi Supreme Court begins its En Banc meetings with prayer. Sculpted

friezes at the U.S. Supreme Court include Moses with the Ten Commandments, and the constitutions of all 50 states contain references to God.

“We shouldn’t be ashamed to have prayers publicly and proclaim who we are as a nation,” he said. He spoke about the importance of faith, saying, “You don’t have to set it aside to be something you are not.”

Judge Lumpkin put on Judge McDonald’s judicial robe after she took the oath. Her children, Hannah and Hunter Lumpkin, helped her don the robe.

Judge Lumpkin said, “I am humbled by the trust that he (the Governor) has placed in me to fill the vacancy that was left by the passing of my mentor and personal friend, the late Circuit Judge Claiborne ‘Buddy’ McDonald IV. I am keenly aware of the responsibilities. . . . I am ready to meet the challenges that I will face but also the opportunity that I have to make a positive difference for our citizens, the judiciary and the district.”

Judge Lumpkin paid tribute to her late parents, Adrain Pate Lumpkin Sr. and Virginia Kirkland Lumpkin. They were educators, and they demanded best efforts from her and her brother, Adrain, in everything they undertook. “They taught us the importance of loving God and loving family, of being loyal and being honest. They also taught us that whatever we were doing, we would do it to the very best of our abilities. My brother and I are continu-

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## Judge Lisa McGloflin appointed to Pearl River County Court

An investiture ceremony for County Court Judge Lisa Beech McGloflin will be held on May 8 at 2 p.m. at the Pearl River County Courthouse in Poplarville.

Gov. Tate Reeves appointed Judge McGloflin, of Carrier, as Pearl River County Court Judge on March 11. She took the position previously held by Judge Richelle Lumpkin.

Judge McGloflin said, "Judge Lumpkin kept a tight ship. It's been an easy transition."

Judge McGloflin will serve through Jan. 5, 2026. A special election will be held on Nov. 4, 2025.

Gov. Reeves said when he made the appointment, "I'm proud to appoint Lisa as county court judge. She knows Pearl River County well and will do an excellent job in this position. I look forward to seeing everything she will accomplish on behalf of Mississippians."

She served for six years as guardian ad litem for the Pearl River County Youth Court. She was an assistant district attorney for the 15<sup>th</sup> Circuit District 2013-2018.

She was judge pro tempore for Picayune Municipal Court from 2022 until

her appointment as County Court Judge.

Judge McGloflin said that she will divide her time equally between Youth Court and County Court duties. She handles felony arraignments, accepts pleas and can conduct bench trials.

She said, "I feel very excited. We have a very good system with our parent defenders and Child Protection Services and prosecutors."

She graduated from Pearl River Community College. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of



**Judge Lisa McGloflin**

Mississippi and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

## Judge Lumpkin puts on the robe that Judge McDonald once wore



**Judge Richelle Lumpkin's son Hunter, at left, and daughter Hannah, at right, help her don the judicial robe.**

ally grateful for the love, guidance, support and the values that they instilled in us. They helped greatly shape us into the people that we are today. They raised us to be the best that we could be."

She told her husband and children, "Thank you for your steadfast support and belief in me."

Senior Circuit Judge Prentiss Harrell said, "It will be a genuine pleasure to work with her." Judge Harrell noted that Gov. Reeves has appointed four judges within the 15<sup>th</sup> Circuit. "I genuinely believe with all of my heart that the four judges will mirror what Amos 5:24 states: 'Let justice roll like a riv-

er, like a never ending stream.' I know that Judge Lumpkin will make a significant contribution and I applaud your appointment of her, and I am grateful to sit alongside her."

Gov. Reeves recently appointed Pearl River County Court Judge Lisa Beech McGloflin. The Governor also appointed Circuit Judge Brad Touchstone to a vacancy on the 15<sup>th</sup> Circuit in January 2023 and Joseph "Jop" Parker to the Lamar County Court in February 2023.

Judge Touchstone said, "Judge Harrell and I both look forward to serving with you on the Circuit Court bench."

Rep. Jansen Owen began his legal career as a staff member for Judge Lumpkin while she was Pearl River County Court Judge. "I have witnessed first-hand Judge Lumpkin's commitment to her community, but more im-

portantly her commitment to the rule of law, her commitment to the Constitution, her commitment to determining what the law is and not how she feels it should be."

He noted that Judge Lumpkin is the first woman Circuit Judge to serve the 15<sup>th</sup> Circuit District.

Judge Lumpkin was the first person to serve as County Court Judge for Pearl River County. The 2010 Legislature authorized creation of a County Court for Pearl River County to relieve a crowded Circuit Court and Youth Court docket. She took office in 2011.

She served as Youth Court Referee for eight years before her election to County Court. She also was Municipal Judge for the City of Picayune for four years. She previously served for eight years as Pearl River County prosecutor.

## Judge Teeuwissen takes oath as Hinds County Court Judge



Judge Pieter Teeuwissen, at right, takes the oath of office as Hinds County Court Judge. Chancellor Crystal Wise-Martin, at left, administers the oath as Judge Teeuwissen's wife Lisa holds the Bible and daughter Nina watches.

Colleagues and friends called newly appointed Hinds County Court Judge Pieter Teeuwissen a visionary problem solver with a long record of public service.

Judge Teeuwissen, 57, of Jackson, took the oath of office on Nov. 30, 2023, and started work on Dec. 4 as a Hinds County Court Judge. Gov. Tate Reeves appointed Judge Teeuwissen as County Court Judge for Hinds County, Subdistrict 2, to fill the vacancy created by the death of Judge LaRita Cooper-Stokes on May 8, 2023.

Judge James E. Graves Jr. of the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has known Teeuwissen since the new judge was a student at Tougaloo College. Judge Graves said at the investiture ceremony, "What he demonstrated to me and many others is that he is a visionary leader.

What I saw is a man who identified problems and then devised solutions to those problems – legal problems, practical problems, people problems. That's what he has been involved in doing throughout his entire career, and those are great qualities for a judge to possess – the ability to solve problems."

"He has evidenced an unwavering commitment to public service," Judge Graves said. "I am convinced that he is the right person at the right time and we can all count on him to do the right thing. I have no doubt that he will serve with honor because the people deserve it, dignity because his family expects it, and integrity because God requires it."

Chancellor Crystal Wise Martin, who administered the oath of office, said, "He has generously given his time and talents to any-

one who would ask....He had demonstrated his contributions to Hinds County and the City of Jackson in the various capacities he has served." She said that Judge Teeuwissen "will be a tremendous asset to the bench, just as he has been to the entire legal profession and the community as a whole."

Judge Teeuwissen began his remarks stating, "If you don't know that a higher power exists, then you need to find out." Then he offered prayer.

A gallery of current and former judges gathered for the investiture. Judge Teeuwissen said that he stood on the shoulders of trailblazers including three former Supreme Court Justices: Reuben V. Anderson, Fred L. Banks Jr., and James E. Graves Jr.

They were the first, second and third African-American Justices of the

Mississippi Supreme Court. Justice Anderson began his judicial service as Hinds County Court Judge and served as Circuit Judge of the Seventh Circuit of Hinds and Yazoo counties. Justice Banks and Justice Graves served first on the Seventh Circuit Court before appointment and election to the Supreme Court. Judge Graves is the third African-American judge on the Fifth Circuit.

Judge Teeuwissen said that he's known them since he was a kid. Banks as a civil rights lawyer worked with Teeuwissen's mother, Betsy Teeuwissen, to make high quality schools available to all. Graves and his brother convinced Teeuwissen not to drop out of Tougaloo at age 16, and Anderson interceded to keep him from being kicked out of Tougaloo as a rambunctious senior. Judge Graves noted that Teeuwissen graduated magna cum laude from Tougaloo. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1987, majoring in history and political science with a minor in English. He did post-graduate study in pre-medicine at Tougaloo.

After he completed law school at the University of Minnesota in 1990, he returned to Mississippi to practice law, although some had tried to convince him to follow a career path elsewhere. Of his predecessors, he said, "They inspired me to practice law. They inspired me to come back to Mississippi...I wanted to be like them."

Judge Teeuwissen

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# Judge McDaniel resumes work in Rankin County Youth Court



**Rankin County Youth Court Judge Kent McDaniel, at left, takes the oath of office on Dec. 28 at the Rankin County Justice Center. Rankin County Court Judge David Morrow, at right, administers the oath as Judge McDaniel’s wife JoAnn McDaniel holds the Bible.**

Judge Kent McDaniel of Brandon took the oath of office on Dec. 28, 2023,

to continue his work as Rankin County Youth Court Judge.

Judge McDaniel said that he expects to serve for a year, but will not seek

election in the special election in November 2024. He said after the ceremony, “The Governor appointed me so that the people of this county can elect their next judge.”

Gov. Tate Reeves appointed Judge McDaniel to fill the vacancy created by the death of County Court and Youth Court Judge Thomas Broome. Judge McDaniel’s one-year appointment was effective Jan. 1, 2024, and will end on Jan. 5, 2025. The Governor scheduled a special election for Nov. 5, 2024, for the Place 2 judgeship.

Judge McDaniel retired Sept. 30, 2021, after 24 years of service as Rankin County Court Judge. He came out of retirement to work as a special judge hearing Rankin County

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## Judge Teeuwissen said that he stood on the shoulders of trailblazers, *continued from page 8*

emphasized the importance of Hinds County as the home of jurists who made significant contributions to jurisprudence. “Hinds County is an important place. It is near and dear to my heart. If you don’t think that the judges across the street and the judges in this building are important, then you don’t understand the value of Hinds County,” he said.

“Bear in mind at all times the words of Martin Luther King: ‘The moral arc of the universe bends slowly, but it bends towards justice.’ It is humbling and it is an honor to help bend that moral arc of justice for the citizens of Hinds County.”

His wife Lisa Teeuwissen held the Bible as he

took the oath, and his wife along with daughter Nina helped him don the robe. His mother-in-law, Brenda Brown, also accompanied him to the service. He said that these strong women are the rock of the family. He thanked his family for their support in their deep grief over the death of his daughter and grandson in 2020, and the death of his mother in 2021. He said, “Family, I love you more than words could ever say.”

Judge Teeuwissen praised the public service of Judge Cooper-Stokes and her husband, Jackson City Councilman Kenneth Stokes. Judge Teeuwissen recalled working alongside Judge Stokes in his first job in the legal profession,

staff attorney for the Department of Human Services. Judge Stokes was an attorney for DHS, and Judge Graves was a supervising attorney for DHS.

Judge Teeuwissen served as City Attorney for the City of Jackson for more than nine years, and as Board Attorney for Hinds County for more than six years. He also served by appointment as Special Circuit Judge for the Hinds County Circuit Court in 2008.

The Mississippi Supreme Court appointed him to the Board of Bar Admissions in 2002, and he continues to serve. He served a term as chair of the board, and several terms as vice-chair. He is a member of the National

Conference of Bar Examiners.

Judge Graves said that Judge Teeuwissen also is well-rounded with community involvement. He coached New Hope Christian School girls basketball 2004-2011, and served as president of the school’s Parent Student Association. He also coached the Jackson Lady Hornets.

He has practiced law in Jackson for 33 years. He practiced for many years with law partner Anthony Simon as Simon and Teeuwissen. Previous firms included Danks, Simon, Teeuwissen & Associates, where he was managing partner; Dockins Simon & Teeuwissen; Byrd & Associates; and Cherry Givens Lockett Peters & Diaz.

## Chancery, Circuit Clerks take oaths along with other elected officials



Rankin County Court Judge Kent McDaniel, at left, prepares to swear in new Circuit Clerk Michelle Adcock, center, on Dec. 28.



New Rankin County Chancery Clerk Mark Scarborough is flanked by his family as he waits to take the oath of office on Dec. 28.

Youth Court cases by appointment of the Supreme Court on April 20, 2023, assisting after Judge Broome became ill. Judge Broome died May 21.

Reflecting on his long public service and his decision to return to the bench, Judge McDaniel said, "I love this county and I love the people of this county and I've tried to serve them the best that I could."

Rankin County Court Judge David Morrow Jr. noted a role reversal before he administered the oath to Judge McDaniel during the ceremony at the Rankin County Justice Center in Brandon. Judge McDaniel had administered the oath of office to Judge Morrow when Judge McDaniel retired in September 2021. Judge Morrow was appointed by the Governor to the vacancy created by Judge McDaniel's short-lived retirement.

Judge McDaniel took the oath at the start of a ceremony in which a dozen other Rankin County officials were sworn in. Among them were Circuit Clerk Michelle Adcock and Chancery Clerk Mark S. Scarborough. Judge McDaniel, Judge Morrow, Justice Court Judge Richard Redfern, Chancellor Haydn Roberts and Chancellor Troy Odom took turns administering the oaths.

U.S. Congressman Michael Guest recognized retiring Chancery Clerk Larry Swales and retiring Circuit Clerk Becky Boyd and thanked them for their long years of public service. He told officeholders, "Thank you for your willingness to serve."

## New Chancery, Circuit Clerks attended Judicial College training



New Chancery Clerks, above, and Circuit Clerks, below, gather for group photos between classes on Dec. 11 in Jackson.



## 12th District Chancellor Charles Smith will retire June 30



**Chancellor Charles Smith**

Chancellor Charles Smith will retire from the 12<sup>th</sup> Chancery Court bench on June 30.

Deaths of family members and a close friend left him thinking about what to do with his life. "It just brought the sense of reality to me, how brief life is," he said recently.

His daughter died two years ago. His younger brother died last November. "We had planned on doing a lot of things together," he said. And his best friend from fifth grade died a few months after retiring. "It just make me think that I need to go

ahead and retire now while I have my health and can do some things."

"It's time. I'm 72."

He wants to spend time with his wife and family. They have grandchildren in Tupelo and Pensacola, Fla.

"My main hobby is golf, so I will get to play a lot more golf and do lots of odds and ends at the house, honey-do things."

His own close brush with death more than four years ago didn't influence the decision. He was shot by an assailant with a high-powered rifle outside the old Lauderdale County Courthouse in Meridian on March 16, 2020.

"That didn't have anything to do with it," He said. "That situation didn't really affect my desire to work as a judge. It just kept me from being on the bench for two months. It happened and I got over it and kept going."

Judge Smith was on his way to his office downtown. He was the first in the parking lot on the east side of the Courthouse about 7:15 a.m. A bullet

fired from a distance ripped through his hip, clipping his femoral artery and splitting the ball and socket joint in his hip. Sheriff's deputies came to his aid. He was treated at a Meridian hospital and airlifted to Jackson, where he spent time in intensive care after surgeries. He was back at work on May 18, 2020, and returned to the bench on May 20.

The shooter, who was arrested nearly 11 months after the attack, mistook Judge Smith for his intended target, trial testimony showed.

Judge Smith said, "I've never had any anxiety about it. I've never had a dream about it, or nightmare."

He became a chancellor in January 2019 in the district that includes Lauderdale and Clarke counties. He was Youth Court prosecutor 1983-2014, and was Lauderdale County Prosecutor for more than three years.

The Governor will appoint his successor. A special election is expected to be scheduled for Novem-

ber 2026.

Chancellor Amanda Trawick Rainey, who was appointed June 19, 2023, will become senior judge of the two-judge district. Judge Smith said he will "turn the reins over to her...She's doing an excellent job."

He will miss the work. "We have a really good working staff. I'm going to miss them, I truly will."

He won't be able to attend the spring Judicial Conference, but wanted to express thanks to fellow judges for "their camaraderie and their support, especially when I was hurt. I certainly want to thank everyone for the well wishes and the prayers and the thoughts. That meant so much to me," he said. "It's a special group that I had the honor to be part of. It was a joy to be around all the justices and judges."

A retirement reception is scheduled for June 27, 2 to 4 p.m., at the new Lauderdale County Government Center located at 612 22nd Avenue South in Meridian.

## Judge Vel Young Graham joins Commission on Judicial Performance



**Judge Veldore Young Graham**

Lauderdale County Court Judge Veldore Young Graham of Meridian was recently appointed to the Commission on Judicial Performance.

Chief Justice Mike Randolph signed the appointment order on April 11. House Speaker Jason White recommended Judge Young Graham to serve as the county judge member of the Commission to take the position previously held by Judge

Richelle Lumpkin. Judge Lumpkin was appointed to the 15th Circuit Court. Judge Young Graham will serve on the Commission until Dec. 31, 2026.

Judge Young Graham has served on the Lauderdale County Court bench since January 2007. She serves in two judicial leadership posts. She has served as secretary of the Conference of County Court Judges since 2012, and as secretary of the

Council of Youth Court Judges since 2017.

She served for seven years as assistant district attorney and for two years as a public defender for the 10th Circuit Court District of Clarke, Kemper, Lauderdale and Wayne counties. She was the first African American female public defender for Lauderdale County, and the first African American assistant district attorney for Lauderdale County.

## State Librarian Stephen Parks is sworn in for third term



State Librarian Stephen Parks, center, takes the oath of office on Jan. 4 at the Capitol.

State Librarian Stephen Parks of Jackson was elected to his third term on Jan. 4 during a joint session of the Mississippi House of Representatives and the Mississippi Senate.

Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann administered the oath of office to Parks after the veteran librarian was affirmed to the post by a majority vote of both chambers.

Parks, an attorney, has served as State Librarian since January 2016. He oversees the State Law Library, which is located in the Gartin Justice Building in Jackson. The Law Library is a specialized public library which provides legal research materials for the judiciary, state agencies, lawyers, students and the public.

Parks' goal is to increase the visibility of the Law Library and let the

public know that it is available to everyone. The Law Library, located at 450 High Street, is housed with the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. The Law Library is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays except state holidays.

The Law Library hosts periodic programs featuring presentations by scholars of history and the law. Parks has worked to bring special events to the Law Library, including a visit by Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden in 2017, and displays of the 1817 Mississippi Constitution in 2016, and again during the 2017 Bicentennial of the Mississippi Judiciary.

Parks established a partnership with the Mississippi Digital Library to provide some of the Law Library's historical items online. He also began a major digital initiative,

scanning the journals of each of Mississippi's Constitutional Conventions to make them available online for historians and researchers.

The American Association of Law Libraries named Parks as a recipient of the 2018 Emerging Leader Award. He is chairman of the Central Mississippi Library Council, and previously served as vice-president and Scholarship Committee chair of the organization. He is a member of the Mississippi Bar, the American Association of Law Libraries and the Southeastern Chapter of AALL.

Parks previously served as Research, Instructional Services and Circulation Librarian at Mississippi College School of Law. He was director of the Judicial Data Project, which compiled into a searchable da-

tabase the opinions, case briefs, and oral argument videos of the Mississippi Supreme Court and Mississippi Court of Appeals from 2007 forward. The Judicial Data Project earned the AALL 2012 Innovations in Technology Award.

Parks also devised and directed the Legislative History Project, a searchable database which archives video of floor debate in the Mississippi Senate and House from 2012 forward. The Legislative History Project won the AALL 2014 Public Access to Government Information Award and the AALL 2014 Innovations in Technology Award. Parks received the Mississippi Historical Society 2014 Award of Merit for work on the Judicial Data Project and the Legislative History Project. AALL presented Parks with its 2017 Marketing Award for best law library newsletter.

Parks is an adjunct professor with the University of Southern Mississippi Library and Information Science Department. He previously taught legal research at MCSOL for five years, and taught law librarianship at Tulane's former Madison campus.

He is a native of La Grange, North Carolina. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in political science, magna cum laude, from East Carolina University in 2006. He earned a law degree, magna cum laude, from MCSOL in 2010, and a Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in 2013.

# Chancellors, Circuit and County Court Judges elect conference officers



**Chancellor Cynthia Brewer**



**Chancellor Troy Odom**



**Chancellor Larry Little**



**Judge Tomika Irving**



**Judge Christopher Schmidt**



**Judge Celeste Wilson**



**Judge Edwin Hannan**



**Judge Vernita King Johnson**



**Judge Veldore Young Graham**

elected Madison County Court Judge Edwin Hannan of Madison as chairman, Washington County Court Judge Vernita King Johnson of Greenville as vice-chair, and Lauderdale County Court Judge Veldore Young Graham of Meridian as secretary.

Judge Brewer previously served as Chancery Conference chair in 2012, and was vice-chair in 2011 and 2022. She has served on the 11th Chancery Court since January 2007. Judge Odom took office in January 2019 in the 20th Chancery. Judge Little took office in January 2019 in the 18th Chancery. He has served as Conference secretary-treasurer since October 2019.

Judge Irving has served the 22nd Circuit Court since January 2019. Judge Schmidt took office in January 2015 in the 2nd Circuit. Judge Wilson joined the 17th Circuit in February 2017. She was elected to the 23rd Circuit and took office in January 2023 when DeSoto County became a separate district.

Judge Hannan has served as chairman of the Conference of County Court Judges since 2015. Judge Johnson has been vice-chair since October 2004. Judge Young Graham became Conference secretary in April 2012. Judge Hannan, of Madison, became a Madison County Court Judge in January 2007. Judge Johnson, of Greenville, has been Washington County Court Judge since 1999. Judge Young Graham, of Meridian, has served on the Lauderdale County Court bench since January 2007.

Trial judges elected officers on Oct. 26, 2023, at the fall Trial and Appellate Judges Conference.

Chancellor Cynthia Brewer of Madison was elected chair of the Conference of Chancery Court Judges. Chancellor Troy

Odom of Brandon was elected vice-chair, and Chancellor Larry Little of Oxford was re-elected secretary-treasurer.

Circuit Judge Tomika Irving of Fayette was elected chair of the Conference of Circuit Court

Judges, Circuit Judge Christopher Schmidt of Pass Christian was elected vice-chair, and Circuit Judge Celeste Wilson of Southaven was elected secretary-treasurer.

The Conference of County Court Judges re-

## Tracy Graves to retire from CLE, court reporter boards



Tracy Graves, at left, was honored for almost 31 years of state service. Supreme Court Presiding Justice Leslie D. King is at right.

Tracy Graves, Administrator of the Mississippi Commission on Continuing Legal Education and the Board of Certified Court Reporters, will retire April 30 after almost 31 years of service.

Supreme Court Presiding Justice Leslie D. King said, "On behalf of the Board of Certified Court Reporters, I thank Tracy Graves for her many years of devoted, effective, efficient and selfless service as its very first Administrator. As the Board's first administrator, Tracy was responsible for getting the agency organized, establishing an effective record keeping system, getting to know and establishing an

effective and cordial working relationship with those persons subject to the Board's jurisdiction, and getting to know and establishing effective working relationships with the governance agencies of our sister states."

Presiding Justice King, chairman of the Board of Certified Court Reporters and the state's longest currently serving appellate judge, said that Graves has served as CLE administrator longer than he has been a judge. Justice King, one of the original members of the Court of Appeals, began hearing cases in 1995.

Graves became the first administrator for the Commission on CLE in 1993.

She assumed duties of administrator to the Board of Certified Court Reporters in 1995 after that body was created by the Legislature in July 1994.

Presiding Justice King joined the Board of Certified Court Reporters in 2011. "Tracy's wealth of knowledge, sense of history and order, and duty and fairness, has greatly aided me and the service of each of this Board's members," he said. "Tracy is a very quiet and low key individual. But she has been, and remains, a knowledgeable, skilled and effective advocate on behalf of court reporters, and on behalf of the judicial system and the public, which those reporters serve. The Board thanks Tracy for all that she has done, and wishes her Godspeed."

The Board presented Graves with a plaque honoring her service on April 5. It read, "The members of the Board of Certified Court Reports convey our genuine and deep appreciation for Tracy Graves' years of loyal service and dedication to the administration of the Board and to the Judicial Branch for the State of Mississippi. May your well-deserved retirement be filled with joy for the commendable work you have accomplished."

Graves said that she joined the CLE Commission as administrator at the urging of attorney Patricia Bennet, who was an adjunct professor at Mississippi College School of Law before she became dean of the law school. Graves at the time worked with the law school's CLE office, a position she held

for six years.

"I went from putting on (CLE) programs to approving them," Graves said of her move to the job as Commission administrator in 1993.

Graves has spent most of her career working with CLE programs. She managed a temp staff agency after finishing college. She graduated from Mississippi State University, then earned a Master of Business Administration from Mississippi College.

Her plans for retirement are centered around family. She has five grandchildren, and she wants to spend more time with her father.

"For Christmas I got three pairs of tennis shoes. I'm calling it my retirement wardrobe."

The Commission on Continuing Legal Education is responsible for the administration of the Rules and Regulations for Mandatory Continuing Legal Education. The Board in 2023 approved live CLE offerings including 312 in-state and 1,310 out-of-state programs; 4,139 CLE programs were given by satellite, teleconference or online through live webcasts and on-demand programs.

The Board of Certified Court Reporters oversees licensing of certified court reporters and the granting of temporary permission to noncertified and nonresident court reporters. In 2023, there were 261 certified and noncertified reporters; four new noncertified reporters were working on their certification. There were 21 nonresident reporters.

## Supreme Court makes appointments to Bar Complaint Tribunal



**Judge Dal Williamson**



**Judge Celeste Wilson**



**Jackye C. Bertucci**



**Charles Elliott Winfield**



**Judge Faye Peterson**



**Clarence Webster III**



**Chancellor Mark Maples**

The Supreme Court in December and January made appointments to the Bar Complaint Tribunal.

The most recent appointee is Circuit Judge Dal Williamson of Laurel, who replaced the late Circuit Judge Claiborne “Buddy” McDonald on the Tribunal. Judge Williamson will serve out the term, which will end on Aug. 31, 2026.

New appointees named in December 2023 include Circuit Judge Celeste E. Wilson of Southaven, attorney Jackye C. Bertucci of Biloxi, and attorney Charles Elliott Winfield of Starkville. Tribunal members who were reappointed include Hinds County Circuit Judge Faye Peterson of Jackson, attorney Clar-

ence Webster III of Jackson and Chancellor Mark A. Maples of Pascagoula.

Members of the Tribunal hear and decide disciplinary matters arising from complaints against attorneys. Decisions from the Tribunal may be appealed to the Supreme Court. Actions by the Tribunal are final if not appealed. The 27-member Complaint Tribunal is made up of nine judges and 18 lawyers selected by the nine members of the Supreme Court from three Supreme Court districts.

Judge Williamson has served as Jones County Circuit Court Judge since January 2015. He previously served terms as chairman, vice-chairman

and secretary-treasurer of the Conference of Circuit Court Judges. He is a past president of the Jones County Bar Association, and served as a Bar Commissioner of the Mississippi Bar. He practiced law in Laurel and Jones County for 34 years before election to the bench. He earned a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law. He is a graduate of Jones County Junior College and Mississippi State University.

Judge Wilson was appointed as Circuit Judge of the 17th Circuit District on Feb. 6, 2017. She began her service on the recently created 23rd Circuit Court of DeSoto County on Jan.

1, 2023. She was elected by her colleagues in October 2023 as secretary-treasurer of the Conference of Circuit Court Judges, and she was appointed by the Supreme Court in January 2023 to serve on the Advisory Committee on Rules. Judge Wilson previously served as a DeSoto County Court and Youth Court Judge for more than eight years. She was vice chair of the Council of Youth Court Judges and a member of the Council for Interstate Compact of Juveniles, the Juvenile Detention and Alternatives Task Force and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. She was Assistant District Attorney in the 17th District 2002-2008. She earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Delta State University and her law degree from University of Memphis.

Bertucci works with the Board Attorney’s Office for the Jackson County Board of Supervisors. She has practiced law for 29 years. She previously served as in-house counsel for Corporate Management in Gulfport. She worked in the firm of Colingo,

*Continued on page 17*

## Judge Latrice Westbrooks named Austin Peay Outstanding Alumna



Judge Latrice Westbrooks

Court of Appeals Judge Latrice A. Westbrooks of Lexington was honored in October by Austin Peay State University as one of its Outstanding Alumna.

Judge Westbrooks was born in Memphis. She attended Memphis public schools. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Austin Peay State University in 1994, and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Detroit Mercy Law School in

1997.

In October 1997, she became the first African American woman Assistant District Attorney in the Second Circuit Court District on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. She joined the Jackson law firm of Byrd and Associates in 2000, then opened her own law practice in 2001, representing clients in both criminal and civil matters. She served as prosecutor for the city of Durant and

as city attorney for the town of Isola. For almost 10 years, she served as a public defender in Holmes County. She served as legal counsel to the Jackson Police Department and later as Lexington Municipal Judge.

She was named as Outstanding Woman Lawyer of 2017 by the Mississippi Women Lawyers' Association. She was inducted as a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation in 2022.

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Williams, Heidelberg, Steinberger and McElhaney, then at Deutsch, Kerrigan & Stiles, and had her own law practice in Biloxi. She is a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi and University of Mississippi School of Law.

Winfield frequently serves as outside counsel to his alma mater, Mississippi State University, and its employees. He also serves as general counsel to The Bulldog Club, Inc., a non-profit that provides support to MSU's athletic teams. Since 2004, he has served as a managing member of the Winfield Law Firm P.A. His practice has focused on civil litigation including matters that impact educational institutions, and Mississippi Tort Claims Act issues. He frequently serves as a mediator of civil disputes involving other attorneys and their clients. In his spare time, he serves as a broadcaster, including the MSU pre-game and post-game football radio broadcasts and the SEC Network+ broadcasts of MSU baseball and basketball. He previously practiced

law with Jones Day in Dallas, Texas. He is a 1994 graduate of MSU, where he earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, and a 1997 graduate of the University of Notre Dame Law School.

Judge Peterson was first appointed to the Complaint Tribunal on June 5, 2023. She was elected to the Hinds County Circuit Court in November 2018 and took office Jan. 1, 2019. She also presides over the Hinds County Mental Health Treatment Court. She is a frequent speaker for continuing legal education programs. She was the first African-American woman district attorney in Mississippi, serving as Hinds County District Attorney 2001–2007 after working as an assistant district attorney. In her early career, she worked for the Legal Services office in Jackson, representing low-income people. She was a public defender before becoming a prosecutor. While engaging in private law practice, she also served as a family master in Hinds Chancery Court 2009-2018. She has a background in physics and mathematics, earning

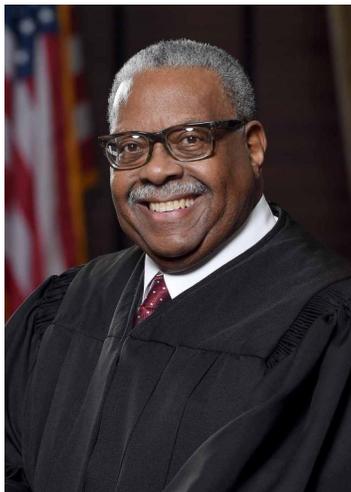
a Bachelor of Science degree from Jackson State University. She earned a law degree from Mississippi College School of Law.

Webster joined the Complaint Tribunal in January 2021. He practices with the Jackson office of Jones Walker LLP, where he is a partner in the firm's Litigation Practice Group. He previously practiced in the Jackson office of the Bradley law firm. His practice includes complex commercial, product liability, mass tort and other litigation in federal and state trial and appellate courts. Webster has held numerous leadership roles in the Mississippi Bar. He is a member of the Board of Commissioners and the Bar's Ethics Committee. He was chair of the Bar's Litigation Section Executive Committee, a director and committee chair of the Young Lawyers Division and editor of the *Mississippi Lawyer* magazine. He held numerous leadership roles in the Capital Area Bar Association, including president 2021-2022. He is a member of the Magnolia Bar, for which he served as membership chair. He is a Fellow of the American

Bar Association, and a member of the International Association of Defense Counsel. He was named to the National Black Lawyers Top 100 in 2022, and is a member The 100 Black Men of Jackson. He is on the Board of Directors of the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and served on the Central Mississippi Down Syndrome Society Board of Directors. Webster earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Mississippi in 2002. He earned a law degree from Yale Law School in 2005.

Judge Maples joined the Complaint Tribunal in January 2023. He has served as a Chancellor of the 16th Chancery Court of George, Greene and Jackson counties since January 2019. He previously served for 28 years as George County Prosecutor. He was the attorney for Singing River Electric Power Association for 28 years, and was board attorney for George County Schools for 18 years. He is a graduate of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, the University of Mississippi and Mississippi College School of Law.

## Justice King honored by National Judicial College and state Legislature



**Presiding Justice  
Leslie D. King**

The National Judicial College honored Mississippi Supreme Court Presiding Justice Leslie D. King of Greenville in December as one of its 60 Courageous Judges.

The Mississippi Legislature echoed the accolades, commending Presiding Justice King for his national recognition and his service to the state of Mississippi. Senate Concurrent Resolution 516 honoring Presiding Justice King was adopted on Feb. 12. The House approved the resolution on March 6.

The Resolution said, in part, "We join the National Judicial College in recognizing Mississippi's longest-serving Appellate Judge and former member of the Mississippi House of Representatives Leslie King for his record of service to the legal profession and our system of justice." The bill also said, "It is with great pride that we commend an individual who has devoted himself to serving the public, the legal profession, and the administration of justice over the span of his professional career, contributing significantly to our system

of justice and to the legal profession and to the State of Mississippi."

The National Judicial College announced 60 Courageous Judges honorees on Dec. 7 in a program which concluded the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the nation's oldest education program for judges.

The Judicial College said, "We honor 60 judges, present and past, from courts in the United States and abroad, who have demonstrated courage in upholding the rule of law and providing justice for all."

Presiding Justice King said, "I am very appreciative of and humbled by this recognition from the National Judicial College. In January of 1995, I took the oath as a judge. In that oath, I swore to 'administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich and ...faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent upon me as a judge according to the best of my ability and understanding, agreeably to the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution and laws of the State of Mississippi.' Each day as I enter upon my judicial duties, I review that oath. As a judge, my objective has been and shall always be to embrace, honor and fulfill the obligations of that oath."

The ranks of 60 Courageous Judges included legends of the judiciary: The late Judge Constance Baker Motley of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York litigated for integra-

tion of universities in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi and helped James Meredith gain enrollment at the University of Mississippi. Oregon Supreme Court Justice James T. Brand served on the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal at the end of World War II. The late Minnesota District Court Judge Dennis Challeen, a longtime National Judicial College faculty member, is credited by NJC with inventing the concept of sentencing nonviolent offenders to community service rather than prison in 1972.

Presiding Justice King has more than 29 years of appellate judicial service. He was one of the original members of the Court of Appeals, taking the bench in January 1995. He was the first African-American to serve as chief judge of the Court of Appeals, serving in the leadership position for almost seven years. He was appointed to the Supreme Court on March 1, 2011.

He previously served for 15 years in the Mississippi

House of Representatives, from 1980 through 1994. He was vice-chairman of the Ways and Means Committee 1988-1991 and was chairman of the Mississippi Black Legislative Caucus in 1988.

In his early career in Washington County, he was Youth Court Counselor, Public Defender, Youth Court Prosecutor and Municipal Court Judge for the Town of Metcalfe.

He has practiced law for more than 50 years, having been admitted to the Mississippi Bar on May 8, 1973.

He graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1970, and from Texas Southern University School of Law in 1973.

Presiding Justice King was the only Mississippi judge among the 60 honorees, although others have Mississippi ties. Jackson native Judge William Alsup, among the honorees, is a Senior Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in San Francisco. He has served on the bench since 1999.

## Judge Deborah McDonald honored with Pathfinder Award



**Judge Deborah McDonald**

Mississippi Court of Appeals Judge Deborah McDonald of Fayette was recently honored by the Mississippi Center for Justice with its Pathfinder Award.

Twenty years ago, Judge McDonald was among founding donors to the Mississippi Center for Justice. The organization advocated for the rights of poor and marginalized people in areas including health care, housing, wag-

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## Pro Bono Awards recognize efforts to improve access to justice



The Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project honored, left to right, Hinds Chancery Court Administrator Tonya Anderson, Chancellor Dewayne Thomas, Chancellor Tametrice Hodges, Chancellor Crystal Wise Martin, Chancellor Tiffany Grove and Court Administrator D’Andrea LaShae Gilmore.

Four judges of the Hinds Chancery Court were honored by the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project for their work assisting poor people to

gain access to justice.

Chancellors Dewayne Thomas, Crystal Wise Martin, Tiffany Grove and Tametrice Hodges were presented the Beacon of

Justice Award. Chancery Court Administrators Tonya Anderson and D’Andrea LaShae Gilmore and the Hinds County Chancery Clerk staff also were

recognized for their work making sure that all people have access to the courts.

The Beacon of Justice Award is presented to members of the judiciary who provide outstanding leadership in promoting and supporting equal access to justice. MVLJP Board member Seth Shannon, who presented the award, said, “Access to justice is a fundamental right, and it is through the efforts of these judges that this right is made a reality for so many individuals.” He said, “Their tireless efforts have helped bridge the gap between the legal system and the residents, making the courts more approachable and understandable....By dedicating

### Judge Deborah McDonald honored, *continued from page 18*

es and voting.

The award was presented at the Champions of Justice awards reception on Oct. 26 in Jackson.

Judge McDonald began her service on the Court of Appeals in January 2019.

She began her legal career representing the poor at the former Southwest Mississippi Legal Services in McComb. She worked for Legal Services for nine years as staff attorney, managing attorney and executive director. She

entered private law practice in 1991. Her practice included civil rights, employment discrimination, consumer law, personal injury, product liability and family law. She did extensive work in voting rights litigation, including legislative redistricting.

She was Fayette Municipal Judge for 23 years and attorney for Jefferson County Hospital and Jefferson County Nursing Home for 24 years. She was attorney for the city of

Port Gibson for seven years, and represented the Hazlehurst School District for three years.

Judge McDonald grew up in Fayette and graduated from Jefferson County High School. She is a graduate of Alcorn State University. She earned her Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law. She is admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court and all state and federal courts of Mississippi.

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## MVLP recognizes judges, pro bono attorneys for service

*Continued from page 19*

their time and expertise, these judges have empowered the residents of their county to assert their rights, seek redress, and find resolution to their legal disputes. Their passion, commitment, and tireless efforts have made a significant impact on the lives of many. We owe them our deepest thanks for their invaluable contribution to our community.”

Free legal clinics are held at Hinds Chancery Court twice each year to address family law issues such as uncontested no-fault divorce, visitation, child custody, guardianships and name changes.

The clinics are usually packed with people seeking assistance. Shannon said, “Court Administrators D’Andrea Gilmore and Tonya Anderson, and the Hinds County Chancery Clerk staff, have done a remarkable job with providing access to the Courts.”

In the past five years, about 400 Hinds County residents have gotten help at the clinics. More than 170 volunteer attorneys and 30 law student volunteers provided services. The efforts included partnerships with MVLP, the Capital Area Bar Association, Mission First Legal Aid, the Jackson Public School District and AARP.

Statewide, MVLP hosted 37 clinics in 2023, the most ever for MVLP in a year. The clinics provided limited representation to 419 people across the state. MVLP also helped 497 individuals gain access to the courts through full direct representation by volunteer lawyers, said

attorney Alicia Hall, vice-chair of the MVLP Board of Directors.

Judge Thomas, who is senior chancellor of the Fifth Chancery Court of Hinds County, began his service on the Court in 2007. He previously served in the House of Representatives for nine years, representing House District 71, and he served as Assistant County Attorney in Hinds County for 11 years. He also was in private law practice. He earned a B.B.A. from the University of Mississippi and a juris doctor from Mississippi College School of Law.

Judge Wise Martin was elected to the Hinds County Chancery Court in November 2018 and took office in January 2019. She previously served as attorney for the Hinds County Board of Supervisors for about six years. She was special master in Hinds County Chancery Court, and was an assistant prosecuting attorney for Hinds County. She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry from Spelman College, a Bachelor of Chemical Engineering Degree from Georgia Tech and a law degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law. She is past president of the Magnolia Bar Association. She is a fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation.

Judge Grove was elected to the Hinds County Chancery Court in November 2018 and took office in January 2019. She was president of the Capital Area Bar Association. She serves on the Access to Justice Commission. She

was chair of the Women in the Profession Committee of the Mississippi Bar for two years. The Mississippi Women Lawyers Association named her Outstanding Woman Lawyer of the Year in 2018. She is a graduate of the Honors College at the University of Southern Mississippi, and earned a law degree from Mississippi College School of Law.

Judge Hodges was elected to the Hinds Chancery Court in November 2022 and took office in January 2023. She previously served as an assistant district attorney for Hinds County. Her private law practice was in family law. She is a former member of the Mississippi Bar Child Welfare and Advocacy Committee and the Mississippi Bar Ethics Committee. She served as a volunteer at Mission First. She attended Piney Woods Country Life School. She is a graduate of Denison University in Granville, Ohio, and earned her juris doctor from Mississippi College School of Law.

Others were honored for their legal assistance to the poor at the annual Pro Bono Awards Reception in Jackson on Dec. 12.

Attorney Harry M. Yoste Jr. of Gulfport, who provides free legal services to victims of domestic violence at the Northcutt Legal Clinic in Gulfport, was honored with the Curtis E. Coker Access to Justice Award.

Recipients of the 2023 MVLP Pro Bono Awards were attorney Carolyn McAlister of Gulfport, attorney Malissa Wilson of Jackson and Yumekia Jones of Indianola. McAl-

ister served as regional managing attorney for Mississippi Center for Legal Services before she opened her private law office. Wilson has been a volunteer for MVLP for more than a decade, donating her time for legal representation of the poor. She is a partner at Forman Watkins & Krutz LLP in Jackson.

Jones serves as office manager for Mississippi Center for Justice’s Indianola office and Program Manager for Special Projects in the Center’s Economic Justice Campaign. Jones manages the New Roots Credit Partnership, an alternative to predatory lending practices that brings employers, community members and financial institutions together to engage Mississippians excluded from the economic mainstream for generations, said MVLP Board member Josie Mayfield Hudson. Historically, MVLP’s Pro Bono Awards recognize attorneys. Jones, who is not an attorney, was honored because “she embodies the true spirit of service and ensuring vulnerable individuals have a voice in the legal system,” said Hudson.

MVLP presented the 2023 Chairman of the Board’s Torchbearer Award to the Mississippi Bar Litigation Section for its financial contributions. The Litigation Section has contributed nearly \$30,000 to MVLP to carry out its legal clinics across the state of Mississippi as well as providing direct representation to MVLP clients, said Ratoya Gilmer McGee, immediate past chair of the MVLP Board.

# Justice Court Judge training includes Supreme Court visit



More than 40 new Mississippi Justice Court Judges were elected in November. More than 20 percent of the state’s Justice Court judges are new to the office.

In preparation for taking office, new judges participated in the mandatory two-week training course provided by the Mississippi Judicial College.

The new judges visited the Supreme Court on the afternoon of Dec. 4, the first day of training. Supreme Court Justice James Maxwell II and Court of Appeals Judge Jack Wilson talked to the new judges about being a judge. Presiding Justice Jim Kitchens spoke about leadership from the bench, including a list of things to never do. Administrative Office of Courts Director of Language Access Deenie Miller explained requirements for providing interpreters for people of limited English proficiency.

Presiding Justice Kitchens, Justice Maxwell and Judge Wilson are pictured at right, above, with the group of new judges. Justice Maxwell, at right, talks to the new judges. Judge Wilson is at left.



## Former Supreme Court Justice James Robertson died Dec. 10



**Former Justice James Robertson is pictured on Oct. 8, 2015, talking to current and former colleagues when he presented his portrait to the Supreme Court.**

Colleagues and friends of the late former Supreme Court Justice James Lawton Robertson remembered him as a brilliant jurist, an inspiring teacher, a talented writer and a man enthusiastic about interests ranging from baseball to opera.

Former Justice Robertson died of cancer on December 10, 2023, at his Jackson home, surrounded by his family. He was 83.

His ashes were interred at Greenwood Cemetery in Jackson on April 12. His family gathered afterwards to hear stories from his law practice, his law school classes and his time on the bench.

“Jimmy stood for all

that was good about the law, lawyering and the law practice,” said attorney Roy D. Campbell III of Jackson. He described Robertson as brilliant, resourceful and a man of uncommon humanity.

They were friends most of their lives. Robertson returned to his hometown of Greenville to practice in the firm of Keady, Campbell and DeLong after graduating from Harvard Law School in 1965.

In private practice, Robertson’s clients ranged from billionaire businesses with complex legal problems to paupers fighting for their lives and livelihoods. He gave the same

vigorous representation to clients on both ends of the economic spectrum.

“I think he was born to be a lawyer,” said former Senator Charlie Ross, who practiced law with Robertson at Wise, Carter, Child & Caraway in Jackson.

Robertson practiced law for 25 years at Wise Carter, joining the firm in January 1993 after he left the Supreme Court.

Ever the teacher, he enjoyed mentoring young associates and law clerks as they began their law careers. Attorney Virginia Gautier of Wise Carter recalled being at first intimidated by the reputation of the lawyer in the coveted corner office. He quickly became mentor and friend. “He was eager to teach and help me learn how to practice,” she said. “He was what I call a true Southern gentleman.”

Attorney Michael B. Wallace of Jackson, also of Wise Carter, recalled Robertson from the Justice’s time on the Supreme Court, and the changes that he brought to the bench. Justices in the early 1980s didn’t ask many questions during oral arguments, Wallace recalled. “That changed when Jimmy got there. If you were standing in front of them being paid to talk, he was going to talk to you,” he said.

Wallace said earlier, “He was not only brilliant. He was courageous. As a judge he would apply the law as he saw it, no matter where the chips would fall.” Some of those decisions included publicly unpopular reversals of death penalties. “He thought people deserved a fair trial and he was will-

ing to do what was necessary to make that happen.... He believed very strongly and had the courage to act upon it.”

Justice Robertson served on the Supreme Court from 1983 through 1992. Gov. William Winter appointed him to a vacancy on the Court on Jan. 17, 1983. At age 42, he was the youngest justice on the Court at that time. He was elected to an eight-year term, and served until Sept. 1, 1992.

Former Justice Reuben V. Anderson said in an interview shortly after Robertson’s death, “He was a Harvard Law graduate. He kept the reputation. He was a brilliant man....And he had so many other interests, sports and the arts. He was a Renaissance man.”

The pair were running club members of the Pochontas Trotters.

Robertson was a law professor before joining the Supreme Court. He was a member of the faculty of the University of Mississippi School of Law from 1977 through 1992. He began teaching part-time while in private practice in Greenville, then taught full-time from 1979 until his appointment to the Supreme Court. He continued to teach a legal philosophy course while serving on the Court.

Court of Appeals Chief Judge Donna M. Barnes of Tupelo was one of his students. “He meant so much to us, not only just teaching us law, but teaching us to think like a lawyer,” she told those attending the graveside service. “He just made a difference to a gen-

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eration of law students who have become lawyers.”

After Robertson left the Court in the Fall of 1992, he spent a semester in Manhattan as visiting professor at Fordham University School of Law. He spent evenings at the opera at Lincoln Center across the street from the law school and enjoyed early morning runs through Central Park.

A lover of the opera, throughout his lifetime he traversed the country following performances of his favorites, especially Wagner. He was President of the Mississippi Opera Association in 1996-97.

Family said in his obituary that he as “an ardent sports fanatic, Robertson relished any opportunity to talk about seeing Ted Williams and Bill Russell play in person, or how he was in the press box to watch Johnny Vaught’s greatest football teams and in the stands for both the Billy Cannon punt return and the Bryce Drew buzzer beater, arguably the two most painful lessons ever in what it means to be an Ole Miss fan.”

Robertson earned a degree in history at the University of Mississippi in 1962. In a 2003 oral history interview, he said that his major was history by default, as it was the subject in which he had enough hours to complete a major. His other course work was spread over interests in economics, political science and English, and he took numerous accounting and math courses, as his father wanted him to follow in his footsteps to become a certified

public accountant.

He worked for the college newspaper during his entire time as a student. The paper became the *Daily Mississippian* the year he was editor, having previously been a weekly publication. His family noted, “In this position, he challenged the school’s approach to race-related matters, and his outspoken editorial policy sparked efforts to impeach him as editor by both the Campus Senate and the Mississippi Legislature. Robertson refused to back down and would go on to be inducted into the Ole Miss Hall of Fame.”

He was editor during the school’s protracted fight to deny admission to James Meredith. Meredith became the first African-American to be admitted to the University of Mississippi a few months after Robertson graduated.

Robertson wanted to pursue a career in journalism. He worked as a sports reporter for the *Delta Democrat Times* in high school. The legendary editor Hodding Carter Jr. was an early mentor. Robertson was accepted at the University of Missouri, a noted journalism school. He applied to Harvard Law School “on a lark,” he said, and got accepted. He earned his law degree from Harvard in 1965.

Robertson’s love of the turn of a phrase is reflected in his judicial opinions, court briefs and scholarly articles. Ross said earlier, “He loved the law and he loved history, and he approached his writing, whether for a client or a book, as if it was more of an art form rather than for business.”

Some of his Supreme

Court opinions mixed literature with legal analysis. Among the best remembered of those dealt with competing interests of fishermen, landowners and hunting club leaseholders over access to the Beulah Crevasse, also known as the Merigold Blue Hole in Bolivar County. Robertson’s opinion in *Dycus v. Sillers*, issued Jan. 10, 1990, begins with, “This is a case about a fishin’ hole....This is also a case about a people, the waters they fish, and a unique culture and lore. These form an ambiguous but real part of our life whose pulse is preserved in the product of our poets from the famous to the obscure.”

Then he spent the next 3,000 or so words quoting William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Ellen Douglas, Barry Hannah, Willie Morris and others regarding the importance of fishing as it relates to the culture, lives and livelihoods of people. He explained in a 2003 oral history interview, “This case in a very real sense, was symbolic of a serious social problem in the Mississippi Delta at the time, and the essence of it was that poor people don’t have a place to fish....And so that’s what I was trying to find a way to capture. And I decided to do this by lifting up lines from Mississippi authors who had talked about the relative importance of fishing and the different experiences of various characters in Mississippi literature where they collectively explain how central fishing is as just a part of the life and culture and social fabric of those people. So that’s what I did, and it got to the point where I didn’t want to leave anybody

out.”

He was a prolific writer of scholarly works, including his volume on the Mississippi Constitution in the *Encyclopedia of Mississippi Law*.

Family noted that Robertson “considered his most significant professional affiliation the life membership in the American Law Institute, and he contributed to the revered *Restatements of the Law*.”

His recent publications include his 2019 book *Heroes, Rascals and the Law*, and his last, *Rowdy Boundaries: True Mississippi Tales from Natchez to Noxubee*, published in November 2023.

The Mississippi Legislature honored Robertson with a concurrent resolution mourning his death and commemorating his lifetime of work. The Senate adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution 515 on Feb. 12. The House approved the resolution on March 6. The resolution said, in part, “Justice Robertson leaves a great legacy of serving the public, the legal profession and the administration of justice over the span of his professional career. His love, commitment and lasting impact on his family, Mississippi jurisprudence and the State of Mississippi will be missed.”

He is survived by his wife, Workers Compensation Commission Administrative Law Judge Linda Thompson Robertson; sons Rob Robertson, Lamar Robertson and Chris Robertson; brother Dr. L.D. Robertson; sisters Dr. Lucie Bridgforth and Bonnie Gardner; and five beautiful and talented grandchildren.

## Retired Circuit Judge Andrew Baker died Oct. 31, 2023



**Circuit Judge Andrew Baker speaks at the investiture of Justice Ann H. Lamar in Senatobia on Aug. 16, 2007.**

Retired Circuit Judge Andrew C. Baker died on Oct. 31 at his home in Charleston. He was 87.

He was buried on Nov. 2 at Bethel Methodist Church Cemetery near Enid.

Judge Baker served for 32 ½ years on the 17th Circuit Court, retiring on Dec. 31, 2010.

Retired Supreme Court Justices George C. Carlson Jr. of Batesville and Ann H. Lamar of Senatobia both practiced before Judge Baker, then served alongside him before their respective appointments to the Supreme Court. Both described him as a model of fairness and even judicial temperament.

Justice Carlson, who joined Judge Baker on the Circuit Court bench in January 1983, said, “He was the epitome of firm but fair. Whether you were a lawyer or criminal defendant, he treated you with courtesy and respect and dignity. He was a very learned judge. He knew the law and applied it evenhandedly.”

Justice Carlson said, “I just thoroughly enjoyed my 19 years serving together with Judge Baker. I’ve lost a dear friend and a colleague.”

Justice Lamar was appointed to the Circuit judgeship which Justice Carlson vacated when he was appointed to the Supreme Court in November 2001. She served alongside Judge Baker on the 17th Circuit for five and one-half years, until her appointment to the Supreme Court. She also practiced before him as an Assistant District Attorney and District Attorney.

“He had a huge impact on my career as a lawyer, as a prosecutor and as a judge,” said Justice Lamar. “He was kind. He was smart. He had a wonderful judicial temperament.”

She said, “I learned so many lessons from him and feel blessed to have had the opportunity to practice before him and work alongside him. He will be greatly missed.”

Judge Baker was elected in June 1978 to the district

which included DeSoto, Panola, Tallahatchie, Tate and Yalobusha counties. Incumbent Judge Dick Thomas, who was ill and had not sought re-election, retired shortly after Judge Baker won the runoff election, and Gov. Cliff Finch appointed Judge Baker to finish the unexpired term. Judge Baker began his first elected term in January 1979, Justice Carlson recalled. Judge Baker never faced another opponent for election.

Andrew C. Baker was born Sept. 29, 1936, in Coaldale, West Virginia, to Jesse and Vessie Baker.

He graduated from Bramwell High School in 1954. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on Sept. 3, 1954, at age 17, and served for four years, until his honorable discharge. He came to Mississippi in 1957, and graduated from Northwest Community College in 1962. He graduated from Delta State University in 1964, then earned a Juris Doctorate in 1966 from the former Jackson School of Law, now Mississippi College School of Law. He was admitted to the Mississippi Bar in 1966.

## Oxford Judge Hal Neilson died Jan. 7



**Oxford Municipal Judge Hal Neilson**

Oxford Municipal Judge Philip Halbert “Hal” Neilson died on Jan. 7 in Alligator, MS, at his hunting camp. He was 63.

He was appointed Oxford Municipal Judge on March 29, 2018. He was elected president of the Municipal Court Judges Association in June 2023.

“Judge Neilson was an active member of the association and was always ready to volunteer as need-

ed,” said Tylertown Municipal Judge Ryan Bruhl, who preceded Judge Neilson as president.

Meadville Municipal Judge Bill Halford Jr. said, “It was obvious that he possessed great leadership skills and it was a pleasure to work with him.”

Neilson spent more than 20 years as an FBI agent. He began his federal law enforcement career in Washington, D.C., in 1989 as a legal advisor and civil litigation attorney. He later served posts in Jackson, then Oxford, where he was Special Agent in Charge for North Mississippi. He retired from the FBI in 2012 and went into private law practice. He also served as prosecutor for the City of Coffeeville.

He was born in Lexington. He played football at Delta State University. He earned a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

## Retired Circuit Judge William A. Gowan died December 20



**Judge William A. Gowan**

Retired Circuit Judge William A. Gowan died Dec. 20 after a fall outside a business near his Madison home. He was 81.

He was buried on Dec. 27 in Parkway Memorial Cemetery.

Colleagues recalled Judge Gowan's 57 years in the legal profession, including 42 years of public service.

Longtime friend Steve Pickett of Raymond said, "Judge Gowan's career spanned more than 40 years of service to the citizens of Hinds County and the state. His time as Circuit Judge was the highlight of his career....It was a place where he excelled after all of his life experiences."

Pickett noted that Judge Gowan served by appointment of two Governors, Ronnie Musgrove and Haley Barbour, to fill vacancies on the Hinds County Court in 2002 and 2006. He also served as a special Circuit Judge by appointment of the Supreme Court from August 2008 through July 2010 to hear criminal cases. He was elected to the Hinds Circuit Court in November 2010 and took office in January 2011.

Judge Gowan retired from the Hinds Circuit Court on March 31, 2018. He continued his public service after retirement as a senior status judge, presiding over cases by assignment of the Supreme Court for another year.

In his early career, he practiced law in the Jackson firm of Waller, Pritchard and Fox, the law firm of former Gov. William Waller.

Former Chief Justice William L. Waller Jr. recalled Gowan's dedication, hard work and attention to detail when he worked at the law firm. Later, as Circuit Judge, "he tirelessly worked his docket to promote the fair, efficient and independent administration of justice, earning deep respect from all courthouse officials, the Bar and the public. His service and work ethic were exemplary, a legacy that will be long remembered."

Retired Hinds Circuit Judge Tomie T. Green said Judge Gowan was fair, just and impartial. "He was well respected in the halls of justice and in turn he respected those who appeared before him," she said. "Judge Gowan worked extremely hard to correctly interpret the law, whether in a criminal, a civil or appellate case from a lower tribunal....It was a pleasure to have him as a colleague in the largest circuit district in the State of Mississippi."

Judge Green recalled the Bible's Micah 6:8 "...and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with

thy God?" Judge Green said, "I am persuaded that Judge Bill Gowan complied with that mandate and has indeed found favor with God."

Gowan began his public service career as an assistant city prosecutor in Jackson 1978-1990. He served as city prosecutor 1991-1994; and as assistant city attorney 1994-1998. He later worked in the administration of the late Hinds County Sheriff Malcolm McMillin, serving as undersheriff and counsel to the sheriff for 11 and one-half years.

Pickett, who worked in the Sheriff's Office alongside Gowan, said, "His legal counsel to Sheriff McMillin was invaluable to the County....He and Malcolm were quite a team together." Gowan and Pickett also represented the Sheriff in meetings of boards and commissions, including charities that provided huge services. Gowan worked in the background, never seeking attention. "He was a part of a lot of good," Pickett said.

Pickett said, "He was a man of few words but when he spoke, you got the message. With Judge Gowan, there wasn't any misunderstanding."

His son Will Gowan in a Facebook tribute at the time of his father's 2018 retirement also talked about how he didn't mince words. "My father was always fair and didn't waste time playing on words. It took about a nanosecond to understand exactly what he thought about something.... There was no gray area and the

line of demarcation between right and wrong was as clear as day from his perspective."

Will Gowan and his sister Lauren grew up in City Court, watching after school as their father prosecuted shoplifters, traffic violators and others misdemeanor offenders. "Those times taught us a lot about what bad behavior could yield - we didn't want to end up on the receiving end of Dad and Judge (William) Barnett! We learned about bargaining, negotiation and the art of being professional. Respect was earned in that room and no one was entitled to anything. I can't thank him enough for those experiences because they have provided more value to me than any business course at Ole Miss did (and yes, he made it clear that Ole Miss was the only college option for me.)"

Judge Gowan earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Mississippi and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

At his 2018 retirement ceremony, Judge Gowan recalled his early childhood, including watching molasses making at his grandmother's farm at Thomastown when he was about 7. A mule hitched to a pine pole walked in a continuous circle to turn the mill that squeezed juice from the sugar cane. He was told to lead the mule. He said that he didn't immediately recognize that his assignment wasn't essential. "Everything we come across in life is an opportunity to learn," Judge Gowan said.

## Retired Chancellor Franklin McKenzie died December 29



**Chancellor Franklin McKenzie**

Retired Chancellor Franklin C. McKenzie Jr. of Laurel died on Dec. 29 at Forrest General Hospital. He was 77.

He was buried in his judicial robe on Dec. 31 at Lake Park Hills Cemetery in Laurel.

Judge McKenzie served the 19<sup>th</sup> Chancery Court of Jones and Wayne counties for 25 years. He was first elected to the bench in November 1994 and took office in January 1995. He was reelected six times without opposition. He retired on June 30, 2020, but continued to hear cases occasionally as a senior status judge by appointment of the Supreme Court.

Friends described him as devoting meticulous attention to detail and having encyclopedic recall of case law. He was a mentoring judge to young attorneys. And he took great care to provide access to justice for all who appeared in his court, including people who couldn't afford to hire an attorney.

"It was an honor to practice before him," said Laurel attorney Terry Caves, the second of three generations of the Caves law practice. "He was a great

legal mind. He had one of the best memories of any judge that I've ever appeared before." Whether on the winning or the losing side of a case, lawyers had the utmost respect for his decisions, Caves said.

Retired Chancery Clerk Bart Gavin said that Judge McKenzie usually ruled immediately from the bench. "He took care of business. He would take notes and make a ruling from the bench and go point by point."

Judge McKenzie ushered in the practice of providing forms for pro se litigants before that became an established practice across the state. "He had a way with people that he could explain it to them," Gavin said. "He knew how to take care of people. He knew how to help people who were less fortunate and could not afford an attorney."

Noelle McKinnon of Laurel said, "He made sure that people that could not afford lawyers had access." McKinnon said his concern for the underserved went back to his private law practice, when McKenzie took cases pro bono or at a reduced fee.

McKinnon worked for him for about 38 years, first as a legal secretary in private practice then as court administrator from the time Judge McKenzie was elected. "In every ruling, in every case throughout his tenure, he was fair and honest," she said. He applied the law.

He modernized the Chancery Court the same way he had sought out the newest technology in private practice. He brought technology into court oper-

ations when many were still using paper dockets and files. He got computers, e-mail and the internet for his office. He was among the first to use online docketing, McKinnon said.

He practiced law in Laurel for 22 years. He was Laurel city attorney for 22 years, and was corporate counsel for South Central Regional Medical Center for 11 years. He served in the Mississippi Army National Guard 1968 to 1978.

He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law. He was admitted to the Mississippi Bar in 1972.

Retired Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Charles Pickering hired McKenzie to work in his law firm when McKenzie was fresh out of law school, Pickering recalled. As a recently elected state senator, Pickering had to spend a great deal of time away from his law practice. "I wanted someone who could carry on while I was gone," he said. "I wanted someone that I could depend on, someone who understood the law....He was a very smart lawyer and I was very pleased to have him join me in the practice of law."

He was a devoted family man. "He loved his family, his wife and his three kids, then his grandkids," McKinnon said.

## Retired Chancellor Shannon Clark died April 4



**Chancellor Shannon Clark**

Retired Chancellor Shannon Clark of Waynesboro died April 4. He was 89.

Gov. Ross Barnett appointed Clark in 1966 as Chancery Judge for the newly created 19th Chan-

cery District of Jones and Wayne counties. He served until retirement in 1994. He returned to private law practice, working until 2022.

He spent most of his life in Waynesboro. He earned degrees from the University of Southern Mississippi and the University of Mississippi School of Law. After law school, he served for three years in the U.S. Army Reserve, attaining the rank of Captain.

His early law practice was in Laurel. After he and his family moved to Waynesboro, he was elected Wayne County Attorney in 1963.

He was married to Kathryn Hollingshead Clark for 52 years. They have three sons.

# Circuit Judge Claiborne “Buddy” McDonald IV died January 1



**Judge Claiborne McDonald**

Circuit Judge Claiborne “Buddy” McDonald IV of Picayune died on Jan. 1 at Forrest General Hospital. He was 75.

A funeral Mass was held on Jan. 5 at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Picayune.

Judge McDonald served as Circuit Judge of the 15<sup>th</sup> District for eight years, taking the bench in January 2016. He previously served for seven years as district attorney for the 15th District, and 16 years as an assistant district attorney. The district includes Jefferson Davis, Lamar, Lawrence, Marion and Pearl River counties. He also previously served as Pearl River County prosecuting attorney, city attorney and later municipal judge in Picayune, and municipal prosecutor for the city of Poplarville. He engaged in the private practice of law in Pearl River County 1973-1984 and 2006-2016. He was recognized at the Mississippi Bar Convention in July 2023 for 50 years as a member of the Mississippi Bar.

Colleagues and friends remembered Judge

McDonald as a brilliant and well-respected jurist and public servant whose death is a devastating loss to the community. Numerous lawyers across south Mississippi recalled him as a mentor whose counsel and advice shaped their lives and legal careers.

Friends knew him as Buddy. He spoke with a soft voice, but his dry sense of humor and gift for storytelling could captivate an audience. He loved history and read widely about a variety of subjects.

Supreme Court Presiding Justice Jim Kitchens of Crystal Spring has known McDonald since the 1970s, when they were prosecutors in adjoining court districts. Justice Kitchens called him “a man of solid integrity, a dedicated servant of the law, and a reliable servant of the public....As a prosecuting attorney he was fair and he was formidable. As a trial judge he took his oath of office seriously and served with impartiality, patience, and devotion to the rule of law. His years of honorable work in our state’s courts will be remembered and admired by all who knew him.”

Mississippi Court of Appeals Presiding Judge Virginia C. Carlton, a long-time family friend, said, “He was a great mentor and role model. He was an accomplished prosecutor.” Judge Carlton worked for McDonald as an assistant district attorney. “Buddy was always committed to the pursuit of justice. He put others before himself. He cared about the victims and their families. He went the extra mile.”

Manya Creel Bryan of Picayune worked with McDonald as an assistant district attorney and later was his law partner in private practice. “Buddy was a great mentor. He always had time for younger attorneys. He was my mentor. .... A lot of young attorneys sought his advice.”

District Attorney Hal Kittrell, who worked with McDonald as an assistant district attorney and followed him as District Attorney for the 15<sup>th</sup> District, said, “I’m where I am because of Buddy. Buddy was a great mentor to me. He gave me my opportunity to grow into and become a prosecutor, which is the most rewarding opportunity I’ve had.” Their styles were different, but Kittrell said he learned from “one of the best trial attorneys I’ve ever seen. It just came to him naturally.”

McDonald was a leader among state prosecutors, serving as president of the Mississippi Prosecutors Association and as a member of the Board of Directors of the National District Attorneys Association. He served as an instructor in the National College of District Attorneys career prosecutors course. He was a member of the Mississippi State Board of Law Enforcement Standards and Training and served on the Legislative Advisory Committee on Redrafting the Mississippi Criminal Code and the Mississippi Legislative Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice.

He was president of the Pearl River County Bar Association, a Commis-

sioner of the Mississippi Bar, a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation and a member of the National Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys.

He served by appointment of the Supreme Court on the Bar Complaint Tribunal, and on the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Criminal Rules of Practice and Procedure.

Judge Richelle Lumpkin said that Judge McDonald had a brilliant legal mind and impeccable integrity and dedication. “When he raised his hand and said that oath, he did everything in his power to abide by that oath.”

“He’s been my mentor. He’s been my friend. He’s been my legal profession colleague. He’s been my judicial colleague. He’s been a personal and professional friend,” she said.

Circuit Judge Prentiss G. Harrell of Hattiesburg said, “He was an excellent jurist.” He was extremely knowledgeable of the law and meticulous in his decisions. “He was a pleasure to work with.”

He also was a storyteller who captivated an audience. “He’s probably the best storyteller I’ve ever known,” Judge Harrell said.

Kittrell said, “With Buddy, you never lacked for entertainment. He had a story for everything. He had a thought about everything. He had an opinion, and he was quick to offer it. He was a joy to be around.”

Bryan said, “He found humor in just about everything. To hear him tell

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## Judge Buddy McDonald remembered as public servant and mentor

*Continued from page 27*

stories of his exploits in the courtroom – his stories are legendary.”

He was a voracious reader, particularly history and historical novels. “He always had a book in his hand,” Bryan said. “He was the only person I ever knew that would take a book to a football game.” She saw it at the Egg Bowl, no less. And, she said, “Back when Trivial Pursuit was a big game, Buddy always won. If you played partners, you always wanted Buddy on your side. He knew all of the answers.”

Judge McDonald believed in public service in and outside the legal profession. Judge Carlton recalled that after Hurricane Katrina, “he stepped up and provided great emergency assistance to his community during the disaster ... and the recovery efforts. He had logistics experience from his military service.”

Judge Lumpkin said that he quietly contributed time and efforts through civic, church and charitable activities such as assistance for underprivileged children.

He was a mentor at the Boys and Girls Club of Picayune and a board member of “Puttin’ on the Pink” Breast Cancer Foundation; member of Picayune Rotary Club; director of Picayune Main Street; and Post Judge Advocate of the Picayune American Legion.

He was a member of St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Picayune, where he served on the church Finance Council.

He served in the U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard in the Transporta-

tion Corps, Quartermaster Corps, and Judge Advocate General Corps. He was honorably discharged with the rank of Captain.

Judge McDonald graduated from Picayune Memorial High School. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Mississippi State University in 1970 and a

law degree from the University of Alabama School of Law in 1973. He did post-graduate work in criminal justice at the University of Southern Mississippi and was a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

McDonald told colleagues and staff that he was proud that the corner-

stone of his career was his service to his city, county and state, but his proudest accomplishment was his family.

Survivors are his wife, Suzy Stockstill McDonald; children Hugh C. McDonald, Neil Sullivan Angus McDonald, Emily Nowell and Erin Smith; and 13 grandchildren.

## Former Workers’ Compensation ALJ Virginia Mounger died March 1



**Virginia Wilson Mounger**

Virginia Wilson “Ginny” Mounger, died on March 1. She was 69

She served as an administrative law judge for the Mississippi Workers’ Compensation Commission for two decades.

Early in her practice, she worked in oil and gas, then served as a public defender. She was a member of the Administrative Law and Workers Compensation sections of the Mississippi Bar, and of the Mississippi Women Lawyers Association. She was named as a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation in 2018.

She was a supporter of Methodist Rehabilitation Center, of which her late father, Earl R. Wilson, was

founding chairman. She served for many years on the MRC Board of Trustees, and was board chair of the Wilson Research Foundation from 2005 until her death.

She was named Volunteer of the Year by Goodwill Industries in 2022. She was a supporter of the Mississippi Book Festival and the Mississippi Museum of Art, along with other nonprofit and philanthropical endeavors. She was a member of the Junior League, Gallery Guild, the High Noon Luncheon Club, the Research Club,

the DAR and Colonial Dames, among others.

She graduated from Jackson Prep, Mississippi State University and the University of Mississippi School of Law. In law school, she served on the Moot Court Board, was a Dean’s List Scholar, and was a recipient of an American Jurisprudence Award. She was a member of the Phi Alpha Delta Legal Fraternity and the Lamar Order.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 32 years, John Harbour Mounger.

## Former County Judge Patricia Sims died November 12, 2023 in Pontotoc



**Judge Patricia Sims**

Senior Status Judge Patricia Daniel Beckett Sims

died on Nov. 12 in Pontotoc. She was 73.

She was a retired Bolivar County Court judge, having served 1995 through 2002. She was born in Bruce, Miss., and was a teacher at Bruce High School in her early career. She earned a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law and served as an assistant district attorney in Bolivar County before serving as County Judge.