

Portrait of Chief Justice Smith to be unveiled Friday in Brandon

May 19, 2004

A portrait of Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice James W. Smith Jr. will be unveiled at the Rankin County Justice Center in Brandon at 2 p.m. on Friday, May 21. The ceremony will be in the main courtroom on the first floor.

The Rankin County Bar Association chose this means of honoring the Chief Justice, a Rankin County resident who grew up in Pelahatchie. Chief Justice Smith was a school principal, practiced law and served the justice system as a public official in Rankin County before his election to the Supreme Court.

Rankin County Bar Association President David L. Morrow Jr. said, "The Rankin County Bar Association is extremely proud of the accomplishments of Chief Justice Jim Smith. He is one of our own who has always been a great credit to the Rankin County Bar Association and now will be in a position to be a great asset to the people of the State of Mississippi."

Chief Justice Smith said, "I am humbled and deeply honored that my home bar association would recognize my accomplishments and honor me in such a way."

Chief Justice Smith was born in Louisville and grew up in Pelahatchie. He earned his law degree while serving as principal of Pearl Junior High School. He practiced law in Rankin County with Billy G. Bridges, now a member of the Court of Appeals, attorney Paul Henderson and Alfred G. Nicols, now a U.S. Magistrate Judge.

He was Pearl city prosecuting attorney 1973-1980. He served as Rankin County prosecuting attorney in 1976. He was appointed district attorney for the 20th Circuit Court District of Rankin and Madison counties in 1977. He continued to serve in that position until Gov. William Winter appointed him as Rankin County Court Judge in 1982.

Chief Justice Smith was first elected to the Supreme Court in 1992 and took office in January 1993. He is the longest serving member of the Mississippi Supreme Court. He became Chief Justice April 1.

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