

Retiring Judge Larry Roberts honored for 37 years of service

June 25, 2015

Colleagues praised retiring Court of Appeals Judge Larry Roberts on Thursday, June 25, as a dedicated, passionate and practical jurist who served with integrity for 37 years.

The Mississippi Court of Appeals convened in its Jackson courtroom for a retirement ceremony for Judge Roberts, who will retire on June 30. He turns 66 on June 27.

Judge Roberts “represents what an appellate judge is supposed to be,” Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said. Chief Justice Waller presented Judge Roberts with the Chief Justice Award. The annual award recognizes individuals whose work has improved the judicial system.



Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr., at left, presents the Chief Justice Award to retiring Court of Appeals Judge Larry Roberts on June 25. In the background are Court of Appeals Chief Judge L. Joseph Lee, at left, and Presiding Judge T. Kenneth Griffis.

Court of Appeals Chief Judge L. Joseph Lee presented a proclamation signed by the other nine members of the Court of Appeals commending Judge Roberts’ service.

Judge Roberts served on the legislatively created Corrections and Criminal Justice Task Force in 2013. The Task Force’s recommendations to the Legislature led to passage in 2014 of House Bill 585, which Chief Justice Waller called “the greatest reform in the criminal justice system in this and the past century.” The Chief Justice also noted Judge Roberts’ service as co-chair of the Uniform Criminal Rules Study Committee, which worked for six years drafting proposed rules which address every aspect of criminal proceedings.

During nine and one-half years on the Court of Appeals, Judge Roberts participated in more than 4,800 case decisions and wrote more than 550 decisions on the merits.

Chief Justice Waller described him as a hard worker. “He was the first one here today.”

Judge Leslie Southwick of the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, who previously served with Judge Roberts on the state Court of Appeals, said he did “extraordinary work.” He called Judge Roberts dedicated, passionate, very able and practical. Whether they were in agreement on a case or on opposite sides, “he brought so much knowledge and so much fervor to the court.”

Judge Roberts added the dimension of a circuit judge’s experience to the court that hears a large volume of criminal as well as civil appeals. Judge Roberts served for 19 years as a Circuit Judge of the 10th Circuit District that includes Clarke, Kemper, Lauderdale and Wayne counties, and eight years as a Lauderdale County Court judge.

In all that time, he had no opponent for election, Judge Southwick said.

“People have trusted him,” said Dr. Raymon Leake, Judge Roberts’ pastor at First Baptist Church in Meridian.

House Speaker Pro Tempore Greg Snowden of Meridian said Judge Roberts is admired for his work, and for his integrity.

Judge Roberts called the praise “gracious exaggerations.”

“My successes do not belong to me, but to all of those who made it possible,” he said. He thanked his wife Sheila and his sons David and Bryan for their support. He thanked his staff, saying, “You made my job so easy and such a pleasure.”

“Just how blessed can a man really be? I’ve had the opportunity to administer justice to the citizens of the this state for 37 years,” Judge Roberts said. “Throughout my journey, I believe my Lord and savior Jesus Christ has stood right beside me.”

He quoted the Apostle Paul and Gen. Douglas MacArthur. Second Timothy 4:7 says: “I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.” Invoking MacArthur, he said, “My time has now come and I too need to just fade away.”

But not quite. “I do not intent to totally disappear from the scene.” He has applied to be a senior status judge, which means that he will accept assignments from the Supreme Court to preside over cases in which other judges recuse themselves.

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