

# Guthrie Abbott honored by Supreme Court and Rules Advisory Committee

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Law professor Guthrie T. Abbott of Oxford was honored Nov. 6 for more than three decades of work helping craft the rules that govern the state's courts.

Members of the Mississippi Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Rules and three justices of the Supreme Court gathered at the Old Capitol Inn in Jackson to pay tribute to Abbott's work.



Presiding Justice Jess H. Dickinson presented Abbott with a framed certificate signed by the entire court commending him "for extraordinary service to the bench, the bar and the people of the state of Mississippi." The court noted Abbott's 32 years of service to the Supreme Court Rules Advisory Committee, and his four years as chair of the Civil Instructions Subcommittee of the Model Jury Instructions Committee.

Justice Dickinson said, "We realized that the bar and the bench of Mississippi all owe a great debt of gratitude to this man for all the years and for his teaching."

Justice Dickinson became one of his students at the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1980. "He has always been one of my heroes," Justice Dickinson said.

"I taught the majority of the Supreme Court," Abbott said later.

Circuit Judge Forrest Johnson of Natchez, chair of the Rules Advisory Committee, recalled studying civil procedure under Abbott as a first-year law student in 1976. "He is a gifted teacher. If we listed all of his accomplishments, we would be here all afternoon," Judge Johnson said.

The Rules Advisory Committee on Nov. 6 named Abbott's former spot on the committee the "Guff Abbott Chair" in his honor. The dean of the University of Mississippi School of Law appoints a member to the Advisory Committee. Professor Ben Cooper became the university's designee after Abbott stepped down from the committee in April.

Members of the committee also presented Abbott with an engraved silver letter opener. "We couldn't put your name on there or the full name of the Committee. We would have to give you a sword," Judge Johnson said.

University of Mississippi School of Law Dean Deborah Bell also was one of Abbott's students,

starting in the spring of 1979. He has been her teacher, colleague and mentor. “He always was a wise voice, and we value him so much,” she said.

Abbott said, “I really appreciate this, more than you know.” He said, “I’ve been honored to be on it since its inception. It’s been a wonderful ride.”

Abbott, 72, noted that he spent half of his life working with court rules. He was involved in efforts to establish court rules through legislation before his service on the court’s Rules Advisory Committee.

Abbott taught full-time for 31 years at the University of Mississippi, from 1970 to 2001. He is now Professor Emeritus. He is former president of the Mississippi Bar. Students named him Outstanding Professor five times. He received the university’s outstanding teacher award in 1986, and was named Ole Miss Law Alumnus of the Year 2000-2001. He earned Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctor degrees from the University of Mississippi. He later was a fellow in law and humanities at Harvard University.

The Supreme Court established the 16-member Advisory Committee on Rules in 1983 to advise the court on changes to the rules of practice, evidence and procedure. The Rules Advisory Committee makes suggestions to the Supreme Court on the need for changes in the rules that govern the handling of matters in various courts of the state.

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