

Mississippi Courts

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Justice Kay Cobb presents portrait to Supreme Court

Colleagues and friends celebrated former Justice Kay Cobb's trail-blazing impact on women in the legal profession as they gathered Sept. 6, 2018, to hang her portrait at the Mississippi Supreme Court.

Mississippi Bar President Patricia Bennett, Dean of the Mississippi College School of Law, said, "Justice Cobb has been a trailblazer for women in the profession."

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Former Mississippi Bar President Joy Phillips, former Court of Appeals Judge Mary Libby Payne and attorney Aleita Sullivan Fitch are pictured with retired Justice Kay Cobb.

Many changes on the bench: 35 judges to retire in December

Thirty-five state judges who collectively have more than 750 years worth of judicial experience will retire in December.

The retirees probably represent the largest group to leave the bench in modern times.

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said, "We are grateful for the experience and wisdom they each brought to the bench, and for their dedicated and selfless service. They chose public service and often went over and

above the call of duty to manage a drug court, implement the state electronic filing system, host an access to justice event, speak to a civic club or otherwise invest in the community. While their future retirement is well-earned, we hope all of them will stay involved in matters to improve the fair, efficient, and independent administration of justice."

Retiring judges will be recognized for their service during the Oct. 25 luncheon

at the Trial and Appellate Judges Fall Conference at the Jackson Marriott.

First District Circuit Judge Thomas Gardner of Tupelo is currently the longest serving judge in Mississippi, with 38 years on the trial court bench. He took office in January 1981 after serving four years as an assistant district attorney.

The longest serving chancery judge is Chancellor Jerry Mason, who has been on the chancery

bench for 37 years. He previously served for about four years as a Meridian Municipal Court judge. Judge Michael McPhail of Hattiesburg served 34 ½ years as Forrest County Court and Youth Court judge. He was appointed after serving five months as an assistant district attorney. He was Lumberton City Judge 1980 – 1983. Court of Appeals Chief Judge L. Joseph Lee and Presiding

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Retired Justice Kay Cobb, center, is surrounded by some of the top women in the legal profession. Left to right are Court of Appeals Judges Latrice Westbrooks and Donna Barnes, Dean and Mississippi Bar President Patricia Bennett, Justice Dawn Beam, retired Justice Ann Lamar and retired Court of Appeals Judge Mary Libby Payne.

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“Justice Cobb, you have inspired and encouraged women, whether you intended to or not. You have been a tutor, a mentor and a role model,” Bennett said. Her example and work “influenced other women to pursue a legal career, opened doors for women lawyers in a variety of job settings that historically were closed to them and advanced opportunities for women within our legal profession.”

Presiding Justice Michael Randolph noted the presence at the ceremony of high-profile women lawyers including former Justice Ann Lamar, Aleita Sullivan, former Mississippi Bar President Joy Phillips, former Court of Ap-

peals Judge Mary Libby Payne and Chancellor Cynthia Brewer. “I think I’m in the presence of great people. These are the woman that changed the face of our profession.”

Judge Payne, the first woman elected to the Mississippi Court of Appeals, said she was disappointed that she didn’t get to serve with Cobb, whom Gov. Kirk Fordice was expected to appoint to a vacancy on the Court of Appeals.

“Unexpectedly, Jim Roberts resigned from the Supreme Court the week of deadline day to qualify to run for the position of Governor, so immediately the Governor appointed Kay Cobb to fill that position on the Supreme Court,” Judge Payne said.

Gov. Fordice appointed Justice Cobb to the Supreme Court on April 1, 1999.

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said that at the Supreme Court, Justice Cobb was known as a hard worker. She was chair of the human resources and computer committees, “but she will forever be best known as the chairperson of jots and tittles,” he said. She was a stickler for following every grammar rule.

She authored 211 majority opinions during her eight years on the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Waller said. Her best known case is probably the Feb. 19, 2004, decision she authored in *Janssen Pharmaceutica v. Armond*, an interlocutory appeal in a

pharmaceutical injury lawsuit that involved 56 patients from seven counties suing 42 physicians. Only one plaintiff and none of the physicians lived in Jones County, where the lawsuit was filed. The decision reformed joinder and venue.

After the accolades, Justice Cobb said, “I’m almost speechless. I’m humbled. God has given me a lot of help through the years. I didn’t do it alone.” She thanked all those who touched her career and her life. “I want to say thank you... for helping me make a happy life, a productive life, and I hope that I can pass it along to my family.”

Her strongest supporter throughout her career has

Gardner, Mason, McPhail are longest currently serving judges

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Judge Tyree Irving are the longest serving retiring appellate judges, each with 20 years of service.

Judge Gardner said he resisted the thought of retirement until recently. "I was concerned that I would not like it but, I think I'm going to. Everyone told me, 'You'll know when the time comes,' and sure enough when it got to the point when I realized I needed to leave the bench and have some time for me, then that's when I said, 'That's it. I'm



Judge Thomas Gardner

out of here."

"I would like to be thought of as stern but fair. I listen to what the lawyers have to say and remember



Chancellor Jerry Mason

those lawyers were a lot like me, except they weren't judges yet," he said.

"I guess it's fair to say I have enjoyed the confidence of seven counties' worth of people. That has kept me in office. I appreciate that. Most of that has been good. Some of it has not. It has been good to me and for me, and I think in response to the honor, I am a better person that I might have been had it not been this way. I think about that quite a bit.

"I've been right in the middle of this for a long, long time. It's the contacts, the people involved. I know I'm going to miss that. But all things have a season and mine's over," he said.

He looks forward to spending time with his two children, two grandchildren and a foster grand-



Judge Michael McPhail

child. "She's five years old and I belong to her," he said. "I've got hobbies. We have a couple of horses. I still hunt and I still fish. I'd like to travel more than I have been. I'm satisfied now that I'm going to be happy about this."

Judge Mason said, "I've been very fortunate and very blessed to serve the 12th Chancery District for these 37 years. I certainly appreciate the citizens of Lauderdale and Clarke counties for allowing me to serve.

"I was 39 when I started. I'm 76 now," he said. In each of his nine terms, he would make a decision during the third year about whether to seek reelection. He faced only one contested election, a "herd" district race. "It always seemed it was the

Kay Cobb portrait, *continued from page 2*

been her husband, Larry Cobb. "He was very important in making it possible for me to be here today, and I love him dearly."

Justice Cobb retired May 1, 2007. She and her husband live in Lenoir City, Tenn. They have five grandchildren, two step-grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

She was surrounded by family at the portrait unveiling. She noted that her oldest grandchild, Robert DeBusk, practices law in Chattanooga. She recalled how he followed her as a child to events where she

spoke, shaking hands alongside her. "I take pride in being the one who steered him into law."

She thanked artist Robbie Boyd of Pontotoc, who painted the portrait. Boyd's portrait of former Gov. Bill Allain was hung in the Hall of Governors at the Capitol in January. Boyd paints landscapes, portraits, still lifes and animals.

Boyd painted the portrait from a photograph. When they met for the first time, Larry Cobb remarked that Boyd and Cobb looked like sisters.

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right thing for me to do.” He is healthy, playing tennis regularly, but said he was unsure if he could finish another term. “If I can’t finish it, I don’t want to start it.

“I enjoy the opportunity to try to resolve disputes for litigants that probably know each other and cannot resolve their differences,” he said. He spoke of disputes in estate and land matters as well as divorce and custody.

Judge Mason has been a speaker at legal writing seminars. “I have always tried to write opinions that explain the law and factual findings and the conclusions,” Judge Mason said. “They might not like the decision. They might not like my reasons for the decision, but at least they will know why I was thinking that way.”

He doesn’t allow the sometimes emotionally charged disputes to follow him home. “When I go home, I don’t think about the Chancery Court decisions unless I take one home to work on.” Family, church and other interests such as college sports provide needed relief.

He hasn’t made many plans for retirement. “I’ve been so busy,” he said in a telephone interview on a brief break from writing an opinion. “I don’t have any

specific plans yet...except to take my wife to the Smoky Mountains.”

Judge McPhail, on the bench since 1984, said, “It’s been a long, exciting journey.” He is proudest of the Safe Babies and Zero to Three programs. He started the Safe Babies program in November 2005 as one of the first four sites in the nation. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges recognized the Forrest County program as a model. The program targets infants and toddlers up to 3 years of age who have been abused or neglected and are headed for the foster care system. The program provides intense early intervention and prevention. The Safe Babies team works with parents to provide them with the services they need to resume a healthy relationship with their children, if possible.

“I’m really the most proud of all of the children and family services we have been able to work into a systemic approach,” Judge McPhail said. A team of people have made it successful, he said. “It’s been a labor of love with regard to a lot of folks.”

He reflected on the joy of reuniting families, and the sadness and stress when children can’t be returned to their parents.

“When you have to take a child knowing the child is not going back to their parent or care giver, that’s hard. It’s not done without thought and contemplation on what’s the right thing to do. Sometimes that can really be tough.”

“I think that you get to some point where you understand you need to move in another direction. I think after 34 ½ years we ought to give some folks the opportunity to serve. It’s TIME for me to go and move on and see what else life has in store.”

He will take senior status, and he may keep a law office with a retired friend. But not just yet. “Right now I’m tired, t-i-r-e-d. I want to put the ‘re’ in front of it and just sit back and enjoy a few months. I want to do the senior status. I also just want to enjoy time with my family, kids, grand-kids, my animals, my farm.”

Court of Appeals

Three of the ten Court of Appeals judges will retire in December.

Chief Judge L. Joseph Lee began his service on the Court of Appeals in January 1999. He was appointed Chief Judge on March 3, 2011.



Presiding Judge Tyree Irving began his service on the Court of Appeals in January 1999. He was appointed Presiding Judge on March 3, 2011. He was chairman of the Judicial Advisory Study Committee.



Judge Eugene L. Fair Jr. began his service on the Court of Appeals in January 2012. He previously served as Chancellor of the Tenth Chancery District 2007 – 2011. He served as chairman of the Judicial Advisory Study Committee.



Chancery Courts

Eighteen chancellors will retire Dec. 31.

First District Chancellor John A. Hatcher Jr. took office in January 2007. He was town attorney for Farmington and Marietta, Baldwin city prosecutor and Prentiss County Prosecutor.



Chancellor H. David Clark II, 2nd District, took office July 3, 1989. He was Scott County attorney 1983-1989 and Scott County Youth Court Referee in



1983. He was chairman of the Conference of Chancery Court Judges 1993-1995, and chairman of the Commission on Judicial Performance 2011 - 2014.

Chancellor Patricia D. Wise, 5th District, took office July 3, 1989. She was Commission on Judicial Performance chair 2004 – 2007.

Chancellor William H. Singletary, 5th District, took office in January 1995. He served in the House of Representatives 1983-1993, and was Clinton Municipal Judge 1981 – 1983.

Chancellor Edward C. Fenwick, 6th District, took office in January 2007. He previously served as Attala County Public Defender and part-time Winston County Public Defender.

Chancellor Jon M. Barnwell, 7th District, took office July 1, 1989. He was Clarksdale municipal judge pro tem 1972 – 1974.

Chancellor Marie Wilson, 9th District, took office Jan. 1, 2003. She was



Sunflower County Public Defender 2000-2002, and Washington County Assistant Public Defender 1995 – 2000.

Chancellor Johnny Lee Williams, 10th District, was appointed Dec. 17, 1996. He was Hattiesburg Municipal Judge

1985 -1996.

Chancellor M. Ronald Doleac, 10th District, took office Jan. 4, 2012. He was Chancery Conference chairman 2017-

2018. He was Forrest Chancery Special Master for 18 years, and served briefly as interim Justice Court judge. He was Hattiesburg city prosecutor 1975–1981.

Chancellor Dorothy W. Colom, 14th District, took office Jan. 1, 1995. She was Special Youth Court Referee for Lowndes

County in 1987. She was municipal judge pro tem in Columbus.

Chancellor Kenneth M. Burns, 14th District, took office Jan. 1, 2003. He was



chairman of the Conference of Chancery Judges 2013 -2014. He served as Okolona municipal judge 1990-2002.

Chancellor Jim Davidson Jr., 14th District, took office Jan. 1, 2007. He was chairman of the Bar Complaints Committee, chairman of the Paralegal Committee of the Mississippi Bar and president of the Lowndes County Bar.

Chancellor Edward E. Patten Jr., 15th District, took office Jan. 1, 1999. He was Conference of Chancery Judges

chairman 2009-2011, and chairman of the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Rules 2007- 2009.

Chancellor Jaye A. Bradley, 16th District, was appointed Sept. 15, 2000. She was Conference of Chancery Judges chair

2011-2012. She was district attorney for the 19th District 1999-2000, Circuit Court staff attorney 1996-1999, Jackson County

Youth Court administrator and referee 1994-1996, and Jackson County assistant public defender 1992 -1994.

Chancellor Michael L. Fondren, 16th District, took office Jan. 1, 2015. He was Pascagoula municipal judge 1998 – 2014.

Chancellor Glenn Alderson, 18th District, took office Jan. 1, 1999. He was Lafayette County prosecuting attorney

1968 – 1984. He was municipal judge for 10 years.

Chancellor John S. Grant III, 20th District, took office Jan. 1, 1995. He was Conference of Chancery Judges chairman 2002 – 2004.

Circuit Court

Six circuit judges will retire Dec. 31

Judge Jim S. Pounds, 1st District, took office Jan. 1, 2007. He was assistant district attorney

1988-2006, and senior Tax Commission attorney 1981 –1988.



Judge Forrest "Al" Johnson, 6th District, took office Jan. 1, 1995. He was assistant district attorney 1988-1994.



Judge Isadore W. Patrick Jr., 9th District, took office June 6, 1989. He was assistant district attorney 1981-May 1989.



Judge Lester F. Williamson Jr., 10th District, was appointed Feb. 13, 2006. He was Meridian municipal judge 16 years, and judge pro tem four years.

Judge William E. Chapman III, 20th District, was appointed July 3, 2001. He was Assistant Secretary of State for Business Regula-



tion and Enforcement for a year, and assistant district attorney in the 20th District January 1998 -May 2000.

County Courts

Eight County Court judges will retire Dec. 31.

Hinds County Court Judge William L. Skinner II took office Jan. 2, 2007. He was Hinds County justice court judge 2001 – 2006, and a Jackson Police officer 1980 – 1994.



Jackson County Court Judge T. Larry Wilson took office July 22, 1991. He is a former assistant district attorney. He serves on the Supreme Court Advisory

Committee on Rules.



Lamar County Court Judge William E. Andrews III took office Jan. 1, 2008.

He served six years on the Commission on Judicial Performance.

Lee County Court Judge Charlie Brett took office Jan. 1, 2003. He was Lee County attorney and youth court prosecutor 1988-2002, and Tupelo city prosecutor 1985-1988.

Lowndes County Court Judge Beverly Mitchell Franklin took office Jan. 1, 1987.

Warren County Court Judge John



S. Price Jr. took office Jan. 1, 2003. He was Warren County prosecutor 1989-2002, Vicksburg city prosecutor July 1985-October 1989, and Vicksburg municipal judge pro tem July 1981 – June 1985.

Yazoo County Court Judge Derek Parker was appointed April 2, 2007. He was Yazoo City Municipal Judge more than

seven years. He was appointed 11th District Chancellor in April 1997 and served through December 1998. He was Holmes County Youth Court Referee. He was a city court prosecutor and a youth court public defender.

Judge Joseph Sclafani sworn in April 23 as Hinds County Circuit Judge



Circuit Judge Joseph Anthony Sclafani, at left, takes the oath of office. Judge E. Grady Jolly gives the oath as Circuit Judges Winston Kidd, Jeff Weill and Tomie Green look on.

Hinds County Circuit Judge Joseph Anthony Sclafani took the oath of office April 23.

Senior Status Judge E. Grady Jolly of the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals swore him in. Sclafani was a law clerk for Judge Jolly.

Gov. Phil Bryant appointed Judge Sclafani after Judge William A.

Judge Prentiss Harrell is 2018 recipient of Chief Justice Award

Circuit Judge Prentiss G. Harrell of Hattiesburg is the recipient of the 2018 Chief Justice Award.

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. presented the award July 13 during the Mississippi Bar Convention in Destin, Fla. The annual award recognizes an individual whose work has significantly improved the judicial system.

Chief Justice Waller praised Judge's Harrell's innovations in the 15th Circuit District, which includes Jefferson Davis, Lamar, Lawrence, Marion and Pearl River counties. Earlier this year, Judge Harrell pushed to create the full-time public defender office for Pearl Riv-

er County to ensure adequate representation of defendants and save money. Having a full-time office of three public defenders has moved cases more quickly to resolution, saving the county the expense of housing pre-trial detainees for many months. It's the seventh full-time public defender office in the state.

Chief Justice Waller said that Judge Harrell's promotion of a full-time public defender office for Pearl River County "has been a very progressive step in the administration of justice....This has provided a savings to the county and will result in better representation for



Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. presents the Chief Justice Award to Circuit Judge Prentiss Harrell on July 13.

Judge Sclafani, *continued from page 6*

Gowan retired March 31.

"I didn't know any lawyers and judges, growing up," Judge Sclafani said. He read *To Kill a Mockingbird*. "My view of what a lawyer and judge did was from that book....Our courts are the great levelers and equalizers. That's where my passion for the law comes from."

"Under our Constitution, everyone has equal rights. It doesn't matter what is their background. It doesn't matter where

you come from."

Judge Sclafani, 43, of Clinton, grew up in Chatawa in Pike County. He earned a B.S. degree in history from Mississippi College. He was first in his class at Mississippi College School of Law.

He practiced law in Palo Alto, Calif., 2000—2003, in securities and patent litigation. He joined Brunini, Grantham, Grower, and Hewes, PLLC, in 2003.

indigent defendants."

Chief Justice Waller noted the 15th Circuit's utilization of federal grant funding to expand mental health treatment and support services in Drug Court. The 15th Circuit Drug Court benefits from two grants totaling more than \$1.79 million obtained by Pine Belt Mental Healthcare Resources in October 2016 and October 2017. The grants pay salaries of a clinician and a peer support specialist to assist Drug Court participants and help pay for drug rehabilitation treatment.

Judge Harrell pushed for implementation of electronic filing for the entire 15th Circuit District, which was completed in 2017.

Judge Harrell's support for Mississippi Electronic Courts "brought the benefits of district-wide electronic filing to the geographically largest Circuit Court district to implement e-filing technology to date," Chief Justice Waller said.

Judge Harrell is the senior circuit judge of the 15th Circuit District. He has served for more than 11 years. He is chairman of the legislatively created Corrections and Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force. He previously served as chairman and vice-chair of the Conference of Circuit Judges. He was a member of the Public Defender Task Force, which concluded its work June 30.

Family First Initiative aims to prevent child neglect, reduce foster care need



Judges who lead six local Family First Initiative pilot programs are introduced at the July 30 summit in Jackson.

Mississippi officials in July launched an effort to prevent child neglect by helping struggling families.

Judges and other leaders of the Family First Initiative are organizing six pilot programs in Bolivar, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lee and Pearl River counties and the Metro Jackson area of Hinds, Madison and Rankin counties.

“For too long in Mississippi we have been reactionary to crisis,” Supreme Court Justice Dawn Beam said July 30 at the start of a conference aimed at creating collaborative efforts by government, the private

sector, non-profits and the faith-based community.

Of the more than 5,000 children in foster care, 82 percent came into the custody of Child Protection Services as a result of neglect. Neglect is preventable if needy families get help.

The Family First Initiative of the Commission on Children’s Justice aims to prevent child abuse and neglect and prevent children from entering the foster care system.

“Children don’t want a new family. They want us to help fix their family and we owe them our best efforts,” said Justice Beam.



Judge Veldore Young Graham, center, Judge Lisa Howell and Judge Charles Wright greet Gov. Phil Bryant during introductions of pilot program leaders on July 30.



Justice Dawn Beam and First Lady Deborah Bryant, co-chairs of the statewide Family First Initiative, discuss plans for implementation.

Justice Beam and First Lady Deborah Bryant are co-chairs of the Family First Initiative. Local steering committees have been formed in each of the six pilot areas. Leaders of those efforts include:

- Bolivar County, Chancellor Catherine Farris-Carter, Circuit Judge Linda Coleman and County Court Judge Hunter Nowell;
- Jackson County, County Court Judge Sharon Sigallas, Circuit Judge Robert Krebs and Justice David Ishee;
- Lauderdale County, Chancellor Lawrence Primeaux, Circuit Judge Charles Wright, and County Court Judges Veldore Young Graham and Lisa Howell;
- Lee County, Chancellor Jacqueline Mask and Circuit Judge James L. Roberts Jr.;
- Hinds, Madison and Ran-

kin counties, Chancellor Cynthia Brewer, Chancellor Denise Owens, Rankin County Court Judge Thomas Broome, former United Way of the Capital Areal CEO Carol Burger, media consultant Becky Russell and businessman George Malvaney;

- Pearl River County, Chancellor Deborah Gambrell, Circuit Judge Prentiss Harrell and County Court Judge Richelle

Lumpkin.

“We cannot and will not ignore the fact that government does not need to be raising children,” Judge Brewer said at a Sept. 25 Family First Initiative organizational meeting in Madison. “We want to establish safe, stable and self-sufficient families for our children, one child, one family and one community at a time.”

The initiative aims to



Chancellor Cynthia Brewer leads a local steering committee discussion in Madison.

work with families so that children may remain in their homes. The initiative will address multiple needs of struggling families by directing those families to services and resources that will improve family stability and create safer home environments for children. The idea is to identify and coordinate resources, and to connect struggling families with services.

Canopy Children’s Solutions CEO John Damon said the creative resources that can be leveraged can help families overcome difficulties. “Families, if they get just a little bit of help, can make it,” he said.

Court of Appeals Judge Latrice Westbrooks said, “Families need hope. Desperate people do desperate things. If they are given the resources they need, they can see a better tomorrow.”



Court of Appeals Judge Latrice Westbrooks, at left, talks about needs of the poor. Justice David Ishee is at right.

In Lauderdale County, “People are really excited about helping,” Judge Young Graham said. “A lot of people expressed that they had always wanted to help, but didn’t know how.”

Judge Mask said, “The citizens of Lee County have learned about this and are embracing it.”

The Family First Initiative invited government officials, community leaders, private business, faith-based organizations and non-profits to join the collaborative effort. Organizational meetings in each area have included discussions of threats facing at-risk families and the community’s strengths and weaknesses in meeting needs of the poor. The local steering committees

will set priorities, develop action plans and organize efforts to address needs of at-risk families.

“The key here is resources. That’s where the courts run into a wall in trying to really provide meaningful help,” said Judge Owens. “Housing is one of the major (needs), especially in the metropolitan area. We see people who aren’t able to obtain housing. Obviously if parents are homeless, children are homeless.” There are also needs for employment, mental health services, drug abuse treatment and medical services, among others.

The Family First Initiative of the Commission on Children’s Justice grew out of efforts by the courts to improve the lives of at-



Chancellor Denise Owens leads an organizational meeting of the Family First Initiative in Jackson.

risk children. The Mississippi Supreme Court formed the Commission on Children’s Justice in 2006 and tasked it to develop a statewide, comprehensive approach to improving the child welfare system; coor-

dinate the three branches of government; and recommend changes to improve children’s safety, strengthen and support families, and promote public trust and confidence in the child welfare system.

Judge Payne to present portrait to Court of Appeals on Nov. 8

Retired Mississippi Court of Appeals Judge Mary Libby Payne will present her portrait to the court in a ceremony scheduled for 1 p.m. Nov. 8.

The ceremony will be held in the Court of Appeals Courtroom on the first floor of the Gartin Justice Building in Jackson.

Judge Payne, of Pearl, was one of the original

members of the Mississippi Court of Appeals and was the first woman to serve on the court. She retired July 31, 2001, after serving for six and one-half years on the appellate court.

She served in all three branches of state government. When the House Drafting Office was created, she was employed to lead the new office as the

first chief of drafting and research. She was executive director of the Mississippi Judiciary Commission and assistant state attorney general.

She became founding dean of the Mississippi College School of Law in 1975. She also served as associate professor, full professor, Scholar in Residence and Professor Emerita.



Judge Carlton joins Access to Justice



The Supreme Court appointed Court of Appeals Judge Virginia Carlton and Circuit Judge Lisa P. Dodson to the Access to Justice Commission.

Other recent appointees are Itawamba County Chancery Clerk Michelle Clouse of Fulton and attorneys John Max Edwards Jr. of Pontotoc, Kathryn Dickerson Clay of

Waynesboro and Patricia C. Gandy of Madison.

The Supreme Court also reappointed Faith Garbin, law librarian for the Pascagoula Public Library, and attorney Charlene Roemer of Biloxi to three-year terms that will end June 30, 2021.

The Court thanked outgoing members of the Commission including Court of Appeals Judge Donna Barnes of Tupelo, who served on the Commission since its inception, Rep. Thomas Reynolds of Charleston, Jamie Bardwell of Jackson, retired WLBT News Director Dennis Smith of Jackson and health care professional Michael L. Jones.

Judge Loper appointed to Tribunal



The Mississippi Supreme Court has appointed Circuit Judge Joseph H. Loper Jr. to the Bar Complaint Tribunal.

The three-year term will

begin Jan. 1, 2019. Judge Loper, of Ackerman, will replace Chancellor Edward C. Fenwick on the Tribunal.

Other new appointees to the Tribunal are Mississippi College School of Law Professor Donald E. Campbell and attorney James E. Lambert III of Pascagoula. The court reappointed attorneys Tianna Hill Raby of Jackson, Kristi R. Brown of Gulfport and J. Cal Mayo Jr. of Oxford.

Circuit, County Conference officers



Circuit Judge John Emfinger of Brandon was elected chairman of the Conference of Circuit Court Judges in April.



Madison County Court Judge Ed Hannan was re-elected as chairman of the Conference of County Court Judges.



Circuit Judge Lisa P. Dodson of Gulfport is vice-chair.



Washington County Court Judge Vernita King Johnson was re-elected vice-chair.



Circuit Judge Tony Mozingo of Oak Grove is secretary-treasurer.



Lauderdale County Court Judge Veldore Young Graham was re-elected secretary.

Muriel Ellis retires; Whitmire is new Supreme Court Clerk



Retiring Supreme Court Clerk Muriel Ellis, front, center, is pictured with former clerks Kathy Gillis and Betty Sephton, directly behind her, and current and former Clerk's Office staff at a June 14 retirement reception.

Supreme Court Clerk Muriel B. Ellis retired June 30 after more than 27 years of service.

The Supreme Court appointed Jeremy Whitmire, 38, of Madison as the new Clerk of Courts. Whitmire began his duties on July 1.

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said, "Mrs. Ellis brought grace, dignity and hard work to the office. She did everything possible to ensure that the hundreds of direct appeals and thousands of motions were properly filed and timely presented to the appellate courts. She was polite and helpful to all the members

of the public having business with the clerk's office. She led the clerk's office in the transition to electronic filing and storage of records. She will be missed."

Ellis, 58, of Jackson, served four years as Clerk of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. She was the first African-American clerk of the state's highest court. Ellis also was the first African-American deputy clerk and chief deputy clerk of the Supreme Court. She joined the staff as a legal clerk on Feb. 4, 1991.

Ellis said the highlight of her career was meeting



Supreme Court Clerk Jeremy Whitmire, at left, takes the oath of office July 1. Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. gives oath.

and talking with Chief Justice of the United States John G. Roberts, Jr., who visited the Mississippi Supreme Court on Sept. 27,

2017, to celebrate the Bicentennial of the Mississippi Judiciary.

Serving in the top clerk position was "a dream

Supreme Court Clerk

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come true,” said Ellis.

Whitmire said, “What I am looking forward to doing is helping to bring together the Clerk’s Office, the Information Technology Department and Mississippi Electronic Courts because the synergy between those departments is key to doing things more efficiently and effectively.”

Whitmire worked for nearly 15 years as a paralegal in the Ridgeland office of Wells, Marble and Hurst. As senior managing paralegal, he managed cases, directed workflow and trained other paralegals and support staff. He helped incorporate information technology into all aspects of the firm’s work.

Whitmire grew up in Clarksdale. He worked in the information technology department of the Clarksdale Municipal School District while attending Clarksdale High School. He began work for Cleveland State Bank while earning a Bachelor of Business Administration Degree with an emphasis in computer information systems at Delta State University. He became local area network coordinator for the bank while earning a Master of Business Administration at Delta State University.

Rankin County celebrates reunification

Children jumped in colorful bouncy houses, scrambled through an inflatable obstacle course and petted a pair of miniature horses on the grounds of the Rankin County Juvenile Justice Center in Pelahatchie June 29.

Rankin County’s first Family Reunification Day celebration included a courtroom ceremony and a picnic. Nine families, totaling about 25 people, ate hamburgers and hotdogs and mingled with Child Protection Services workers, Youth Court staff, local law enforcement officers and other local officials.

Things didn’t start out on such a cheerful note for these parents who landed in Youth Court facing allegations of child neglect.

“It’s been three years, a long and difficult journey,” one young mother said at the courtroom ceremony. “I was rebellious. I didn’t know which direction to go. I am happy they have pushed me to be the mom that I’ve become. I just needed that push.” She regained custody of her son.

Rankin County Youth Court Judge Thomas Broome picked up the child and let him hold the gavel.

“It is such a great joy to be able to bring children



back home and see the family bonds restored,” said Judge Broome. “We are here today to celebrate the fundamental reason why Youth Courts exist, to bring families and children together.”

Although children are placed in foster care temporarily due to allegations of abuse and neglect, the goal of Youth Court and Child Protection Services is reunification of children with parents if parents are able to show that they can provide a safe and nurturing home. Parent attorneys, Child Protection Services, the Youth Court, guardians ad litem and Region 8 Mental Health have worked with parents to make changes in their homes and lifestyles so that children may return to

their families.

Rankin County has seen a 49 percent reduction in children in foster care during the past year, Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said in a letter to the Board of Supervisors.

Judge Broome attributed part of the decrease to the advocacy of attorneys who represent the parents, “giving families a voice in the courtroom that they might not have had before.” Rankin County was among the first three counties participating in a pilot program that began in 2012 to provide indigent parents with attorneys.

Chief Justice Waller in the letter to the Board of Supervisors said, “Because of the Parent Representation Project and your

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Retired Chancellor Donald Patterson died July 10, 2018



Retired Chancellor Donald B. Patterson of Brookhaven died July 10, 2018. He was 87.

A funeral service was held July 13 at Ole Towne Church in Brookhaven. Interment was at Monticello City Cemetery.

Judge Patterson served the 15th Chancery District

of Copiah and Lincoln counties January 1991 through December 1998.

Chancellor Ed Patten Jr., who followed Judge Patterson on the bench, said he aspired to follow the example Judge Patterson set. "During the eight years he was on the bench and thereafter as one I could call and seek counsel, I learned more about being a lawyer and a chancellor than law school and law practice could ever have offered. He was a legal scholar, a mentor and a friend."

Judge Patterson was

born Oct. 14, 1930, to Hiram Jerome Patterson and Lida Trawick Alford Patterson in Monticello, Mississippi. He graduated from Central High School in Jackson and began studies at the University of Mississippi, but left college to join the U.S. Navy. He served as a radio operator in Corpus Christi, Texas, then was assigned to Key West, Fla. He earned a law degree from the University of Mississippi after completing his military service. He served as business manager of the *Mississippi Law Journal*.

He was admitted to the practice of law in 1958. He opened his first law practice in Brookhaven with his cousin, the late Emmitt Allen. He was in private law practice in Brookhaven until he took the bench in January 1991.

The Brookhaven *Daily Leader* recounted that when he attended the National Judicial College, he requested that someone send him grits, because he couldn't find a place in Reno, Nevada that served grits. It made the news on the Paul Harvey radio show.

Family reunification, *continued from page 13*

matching funds with private foundations, attorneys are working hard to maintain the safety of Mississippi children while preventing removal from the home. Recent research shows that removal of children from their home causes trauma as harmful or more harmful than the environment from which the child is removed. These attorneys are able to achieve reunification faster, require reasonable service plans for the parents, or move children to permanency through adoption where reunification is not appropri-

ate."

"When they (parents) feel like they are a part of the process, it makes a difference in the outcomes for those families," said Carlyn Hicks, director of Mission First Legal Aid.

Hicks and Mission First parent representation attorney Corey Gerber were among eight recipients of Hero Awards presented at the Reunification Celebration. Other Hero Award recipients were Child Protection Services Supervisors Danielle Armistad and Cynthia Moore, CPS Family Specialists Shannon



A child who was reunited with family picks out a gift basket.

Lewis and Tiffany Robinson, and Guardians ad Litem Linda Martin and Ann Moore. Mission First was also recognized as a Reunification Superhero.

The Rankin County Board of Supervisors established Family Reunification Day by a proclamation issued on June 18.

Retired Judge Henry Lackey died August 17, 2018

Retired Circuit Judge Henry L. Lackey died Aug. 17, 2018, at Baptist Memorial Hospital in his hometown of Calhoun City. He was 83.

Judge Lackey was remembered as a gentleman of deep faith, quick wit and an unwavering commitment to judicial integrity. He alerted federal authorities of an attempted bribe and wore a wire in an investigation that sent the state's most famous lawyer and other high-profile attorneys to prison.

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said, "He was one of the most outstanding jurists in the history of the state. His courageous acts in the bribery investigation were done without regard to his health and safety, for the preservation of the integrity of the judiciary. He is one of my heroes."

Judge Lackey was indignant that anyone would have thought he could be influenced, but he spoke modestly of his role. Afterwards he said, "It's like praising the sheriff for not stealing. It's your job....It's just doing what you promised to do when you took the oath." He also said, "I just did what so many judges do every day: fulfill

their responsibility and their obligation. Public officials are just supposed to do what is right."

Judge Lackey's son, Kevin Lackey, director of the Administrative Office of Courts, said, "I would like for him to be remembered as a fair judge. He treated everyone fairly." He was gregarious. "He enjoyed laughter and good jokes. He enjoyed being around people and having a good time."

"I just wonder what would be some of the jokes he might say if he looked out and saw this crowd," Rev. Jimmy Vance said as he began his eulogy. Judge Lackey years earlier had picked out a favorite joke and asked that Vance tell it at his funeral. Vance dutifully recounted "the chicken story" about a revival preacher who was fed chicken at every meal.

Judge Lackey loved music. He and his friends entertained at nursing homes and at benefit programs. He played upright bass. His funeral closed with a recording of Judge Lackey and his band mates playing and singing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

He is survived by his



wife of almost 60 years, retired music teacher Helen Rose James Lackey of Calhoun City, and their son, Kevin Lackey of Ridgeland.

Gov. Kirk Fordice appointed Judge Lackey in 1993 in the Third Circuit District of Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Lafayette, Marshall, Tippah and Union counties. He served for 17 years. He served on the Commission on Judicial Performance for six years. He was chairman at the time he retired in December 2010.

He continued his judicial service after he retired from the Circuit Court bench. Six days after his last term ended, he signed up as a senior status judge. For seven more years, he heard cases around the state by appointment of the Supreme Court, taking

over for judges who stepped aside due to conflicts. He handled 45 cases as a senior status judge.

He graduated from Calhoun City High School in 1952, and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Mississippi College in 1956. He paid a large portion of his tuition by working part time for Deposit Guaranty National Bank while he was a student, and from his childhood savings. As a youth, he popped and sold popcorn at his father's Ben Franklin five and ten-cent store in Calhoun City.

He ran the family business after his father passed away. His National Guard unit was activated, and he served in the U.S. Army 1961—1962. He graduated from the University of Mississippi School of Law

Former Chancellor J.N. Randall died October 15, 2018



Former Chancellor James Norman (J.N.) Randall Jr. died at his Gulfport home Oct. 15, 2018. He was 77.

A funeral service was

held Oct. 19 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Gulfport. Interment was at Evergreen Cemetery in Gulfport.

Judge Randall was a chancellor of the 8th District of Harrison, Hancock and Stone Counties 1991-2001. He served as a senior status judge for many years after his retirement.

He was born in Pica-yune, the son of James N. Randall Sr. and Dorothy Stewart Randal. The fami-

ly moved to the Gulf Coast when he was a small child.

He was a graduate of Gulfport High School, the University of Southern Mississippi and the former Jackson School of Law. He practiced law on the Gulf Coast.

He was an avid fisherman and outdoorsman. He enjoyed hunting, hiking, rugged back packing camping trips, dog mushing, skiing, birding, gardening and traveling.

Judge Henry Lackey, *Continued from page 15*

in 1966. He was soon elected Calhoun County prosecuting attorney, and served four years.

He served for a year as the state's first public defender. Judge Noah "Soggy" Sweat oversaw the pilot program at the University of Mississippi School of Law. Lackey and three senior law students represented indigent defendants in the seven counties of the Third Circuit District. The program helped lay the groundwork for the Mississippi Legislature to give counties authority to designate funds for public defenders.

He was board attorney for the Calhoun County Board of Supervisors for

eight years. He was a solo practitioner for 26 years.

He was a member of the Mississippi Bar for almost 52 years, a fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation and former president of the Calhoun County Bar Association and Third Circuit Bar Association. He received numerous honors, including the Chief Justice Award in 2008.

He served on the Board of Trustees of Mississippi College and as President of the Fifty Year Club. In 2009, Mississippi College honored him as Alumnus of the Year. He was a recipient of the Order of the Golden Arrow.

He was a member of First Baptist Church in

Calhoun City for more than 70 years. He taught Sunday School for about 50 years, and remained a deacon.

Rev. Mike Smith, wearing a blue suit that the judge bought for him, reflected on his generosity and willingness to help. If any member of the church youth basketball team was shy of funds to participate, he would make up the difference. When the leader of the church sports program died, Judge Lackey came to a meeting called to keep the program going. Each person made a suggestion of what he or she could do. When they got to Judge Lackey, he offered, "I can pop popcorn."

Chancery Clerk Thomas Tolliver died August 21



Longtime Wilkinson County Chancery Clerk Thomas C. Tolliver died Aug. 21, 2018, at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge. He was 67.

At the time of his death, he was the longest serving chancery clerk in the state, having served since June 1979. He also served as emergency management director for Wilkinson County.

Tolliver was born in the Lesley community of Wilkinson County. He earned a degree in biology from Jackson State University.

The Mississippi Senate on Aug. 29 adopted a resolution mourning his death, stating, "...we pay tribute and cherish fondly the memory of this most public-spirited and talented citizen of Mississippi.