

LETTERS FROM THE LIBRARY

NEWSLETTER OF THE STATE LAW LIBRARY OF MISSISSIPPI

"There shall be ... a library ... known as the state library"

An Act to provide for a State Library – General Laws, 1838

August 2024

In This Issue

COA Members	1
Reading?	5
Annual Reports	6
Dr. Smith	7

State Library Hours

Monday – Friday
8am – 5pm

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Court of Appeals at 30: Original Members

January 2025 will mark thirty years since the Court of Appeals began its work of helping the Supreme Court in eliminating a backlog of cases. The ten members of the new court were sworn in at the state Capitol on Tuesday, January 2, 1995. Judge John Fraiser, Jr., of Greenwood, the first Chief Judge, "promised the Supreme Court justices and a crowd of about 300 people that the appeals court will 'bring our judicial system into the 21st century'." *The Greenwood Commonwealth*, Jan. 04, 1995.



Members of the new Mississippi Court of Appeals raise their hands to be sworn in during the investiture of judges at the Mississippi State Capitol Tuesday. Judges visible with hands raised from left are: Thomas A. Coleman, John J. Fraiser, Billy G. Bridges, Leslie H. Southwick, Oliver E. Diaz Jr., and James E. Thomas. -AP Photo

The Clarksdale Press Register, Wednesday, Jan. 4, 1995

The *Mississippi Lawyer* published a [Meet the Judges](#) profile in its January-February 1995 issue. Profiles of the ten members of the new Court of Appeals are shared on the next few pages.

“My personal objective is to work hard with the other nine judges of Mississippi’s new Court of Appeals to realize quickly the court’s potential for expediting justice in those cases which the Mississippi Supreme Court sends to it and thus earn the respect of (1) the Justices of our Supreme Court, (2) Mississippi’s trial judiciary, (3) members of The Mississippi Bar, and (4) Mississippi’s citizens who will pay for the operation of the Court of Appeals with their taxes which are the result of their own hard work.”

– JUDGE THOMAS A. COLEMAN



JUDGE THOMAS A. COLEMAN

DISTRICT 1
POSITION 1

Graduate University of Mississippi and the University of Mississippi School of Law; Captain, U.S. Army; former District Attorney for the Fifth Circuit Court District; former Court Administrator for the Mississippi Supreme Court; private practitioner in Ackerman; married to the former Frances Witty McLean and is the father of five children.



“I believe the aim of the Court of Appeals should be to expeditiously render decisions that clearly and concisely apply the established body of law to the facts at hand, and I intend to use my best efforts to advance that objective.”

– JUDGE ROGER H. MCMILLIN, JR.

JUDGE ROGER H. MCMILLIN, JR.

DISTRICT 1
POSITION 2

Graduate Mississippi State University and Memphis State University Law School; Ensign, Naval Officer Candidate School; Communications Officer with the Naval Security Group; Office of the General Counsel for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Atlanta Regional Attorney’s Office; City Attorney for the city of New Albany; former Bar Commissioner for the Third Circuit District; named Industrial Development Volunteer Laureate by the Governor in 1990; former president of the New Albany Rotary Club; presently serves as President of the Union County Library Board; private practitioner in New Albany; father of two children.



“The legislative established Court of Appeals, requested and recommended by our Supreme Court, the Mississippi Judicial Advisory Committee, and The Mississippi Bar, provides a unique opportunity for public service in implementation of a new court system created and hopefully destined to decrease delay and improve the quality of appellate decisions.”

– JUDGE JOHN J. FRAISER, JR.

JUDGE JOHN J. FRAISER, JR.

DISTRICT 2
POSITION 1

Graduate Mississippi State University, Delta State University and University of Mississippi School of Law; U.S. Air Force combat veteran; Prosecuting attorney for Leflore County; State Senator; Mississippi Supreme Court Magistrate; former Director of Leflore County March of Dimes; private practitioner in Greenwood; married to the former Jennie Garrott Whitehead and is the father of two children and two step-children.

POSITION 1

“As a Judge, whether the case is criminal or civil, the courts have an obligation to fairly, effectively and with dispatch resolve the matters before them, so that litigants may move forward with their lives.”

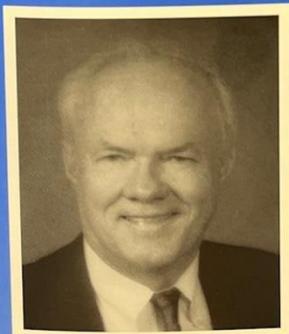
– JUDGE LESLIE D. KING

Graduate University of Mississippi and Texas Southern University Law School; Washington County Youth Court Counselor; Municipal Court Judge; MS House of Representative; former Board member of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in Austin, TX, North MS Rural Legal Services, Governor’s Commission on Juvenile Justice Standards; currently Director of the Washington County United Way; private practitioner in Greenville; married to the former Patricia Smith and is the father of two children.



JUDGE LESLIE D. KING

DISTRICT 2
POSITION 2



“It is my aspiration that the Court of Appeals will enhance the administration of justice for the benefit of all who utilize it.”

– JUDGE BILLY G. BRIDGES

Graduate University of Mississippi and University of Mississippi School of Law; Board attorney for Florence, Pelahatchie, Rankin Medical Center and Rankin County School Board; Rankin County Prosecuting Attorney; District Attorney for 20th Circuit Court; Chancery Judge for 20th Chancery Court; United States Marine Corps; Korean veteran; general practitioner in Rankin County; married to the former Sandra Acuff and is the father of four children.

JUDGE BILLY G. BRIDGES

DISTRICT 3
POSITION 1

DISTRICT 2
POSITION 2



“Efficiency and Justice are not mutually exclusive; I intend for us to accomplish both without sacrificing either.”

– JUDGE MARY LIBBY PAYNE

Graduate University of Mississippi and University of Mississippi School of Law; private practitioner in Hinds and Rankin Counties; legislative draftsman; Executive Director for the Mississippi Judiciary Commission; Chief, Drafting and Research House of Representatives; Assistant Attorney General for the State of Mississippi; Life membership in the Fellows of the American Bar Foundation; Professor of Law and former Dean of Mississippi College School of Law; married to Bobby R. Payne and is the mother of two children.

JUDGE MARY LIBBY PAYNE

DISTRICT 3
POSITION 2

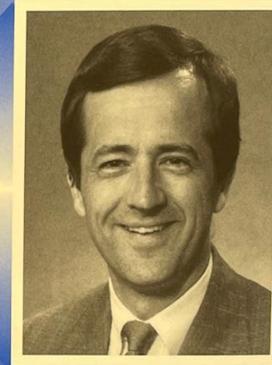


DISTRICT 3
POSITION 2

“My hope is that a year from now the people who have given us the honor to serve will be confident that this new court is playing a significant role in improving the quality of justice in Mississippi.”

– JUDGE LESLIE H. SOUTHWICK

Graduate of Rice University and the University of Texas School of Law; Law Clerk for the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and U.S. Court of Appeals; private practitioner in Hinds County; U.S. Deputy Assistant Attorney General; Adjunct Professor MS College School of Law; Commissioned Officer, Judge Advocate General Corps., U.S. Army Reserves; married to the former Sharon Pulasek and has two children.



JUDGE LESLIE H. SOUTHWICK

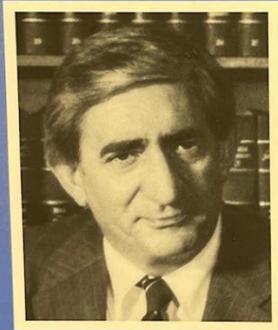
DISTRICT 4
POSITION 1



DISTRICT 4
POSITION 1

“It is a rare privilege to be a charter member of the Court of Appeals, which has the potential for resolving a great number of legal problems which have plagued the State for too long.”

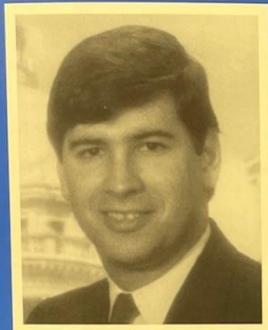
– JUDGE FRANK D. BARBER



JUDGE FRANK D. BARBER

DISTRICT 4
POSITION 2

Graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi and George Washington University National Law Center; former State Senator; Assistant to Governor of Mississippi; Legislative Assistant to President Pro Tempore and Chairman of Judiciary Committee, U.S. Senate; private practitioner in Hattiesburg and Jackson; married to the former Mary Jane Burch and is the father of seven children.



“I would like to see the new Court travel around the State in three Judge panels and hear appeals on the local level rather than having all appeals heard in Jackson.”

– JUDGE OLIVER E. DIAZ, JR.

JUDGE OLIVER E. DIAZ, JR.

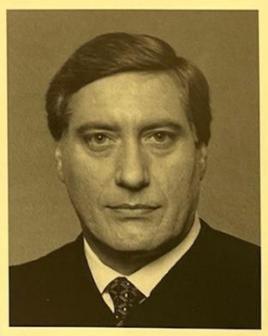
DISTRICT 5
POSITION 1

Graduate University of South Alabama and the University of Mississippi School of Law; private practitioner; City Attorney for City of D'Iberville; MS House of Representatives; Host Family, Foreign Student Exchange Program; Harrison County Council of Governments; married to the former Jennifer Oestreich and is the father of one child.

“I am proud to be part of one of the most fundamental changes in the judicial system in this State. I look forward to working with my colleagues to help alleviate the overloaded appellate docket in this state.”

– JUDGE JAMES E. THOMAS

Graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi and the University of Mississippi School of Law; private practitioner in Biloxi; Assistant District Attorney for 2nd Circuit Court District; Circuit Court Judge for 2nd Circuit Court District; former Chair of Circuit Court Judges Conference of MS; married to the former Sue Gatewood and is the father of two children.

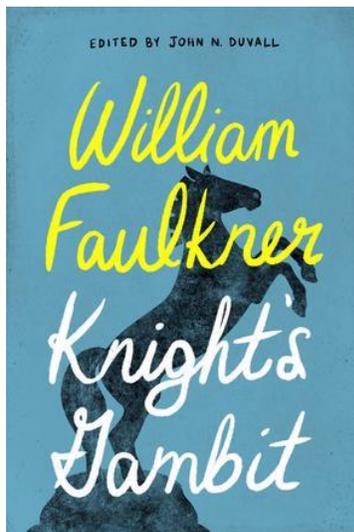


JUDGE JAMES E. THOMAS

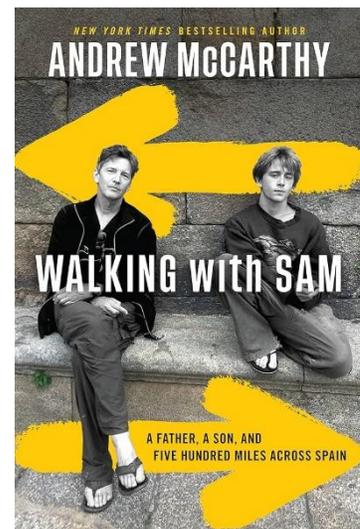
DISTRICT 5
POSITION 2

What Are You Reading?

Judge David McCarty: “While it first debuted in 1949, University Press of Mississippi has recently published a wonderfully revised collection of William Faulkner’s detective stories, [Knight’s Gambit](#). The stories all feature Bill’s version of Sherlock, Gavin Stevens, who is the county attorney for Yoknapatawpha. Like all collections, some stories are better than others, and while the Old Man is a master of prose, he’s not always as great at constructing puzzles. But worth a few days of your time, especially to see how Mr. Stevens navigates his elected role and his duties as a lawyer.”



Stephen Parks: “I recently finished [Walking with Sam: A Father, a Son, and Five Hundred Miles Across Spain](#). I’ve been fascinated by the Camino de Santiago for a number of years. The Camino is a network of ancient pilgrim routes that lead up to the shrine of the apostle James in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain. I had told myself I’d walk it by age 40 which never happened. Maybe by age 50? *Walking with Sam* is a travel memoir by actor Andrew McCarthy, a member of the 1980s Brat Pack. McCarthy and his oldest son walked the Camino and found that the experience pushed them to have more discussions in those five weeks than they had had the previous twenty years.”



** If you’d like to share your latest reads in future Library newsletters, email [Stephen Parks](#).

Supreme Court Annual Reports Digitized

The Library is digitizing from its collection print copies of the Supreme Court Annual Reports covering the years 1989-1997. Annual Reports 1998-Present have been available online for some time. The [1989 Annual Report](#) and the [1990 Annual Report](#) have been uploaded to the Court's web site, and work continues on the others.

Of historical note, the 1989 Annual Report includes the Memorial Order adopted in tribute to the life and leadership of Supreme Court Clerk of Court, Sue Gordon, who passed away in November 1989.

Article from the *Clarion Ledger*, Nov. 17, 1989



Mrs. Sue Gordon: Supreme Court clerk dies Thursday at 50.

Mrs. Sue Gordon, high court clerk

By **Jerry Mitchell**
Clarion-Ledger Staff Writer

State Supreme Court Clerk Sue Gordon, who helped lead the drive to computerize Mississippi's courts, died of a massive heart attack Thursday.

The 50-year-old veteran clerk was found by co-workers about 5:30 p.m. Thursday. Paramedics called to the scene transported her to Mississippi Baptist Medical Center but were unable to revive her. Mrs. Gordon was pronounced dead at 6:35 p.m.

Funeral arrangements, under direction of Wright & Ferguson Funeral Home, are incomplete.

The death shocked those who knew and worked with Mrs. Gordon, a Crystal Springs resident.

"We're stunned," said Supreme Court Administrator Amy Whitten. "We're still numb."

"I am just so hurt," said Presiding Justice Dan Lee, who traveled with Mrs. Gordon to talk about computerizing courts. "The state of

Mississippi has lost some super person."

Appointed clerk in 1986, Mrs. Gordon worked for the court for two decades.

"I've been on the court going on 15 years," said Chief Justice Roy Noble Lee. "She's been one of the most competent, most lovable persons we've had up there. It's a tragedy really to our court and to the state

of Mississippi."

In addition to her responsibilities as clerk, she was secretary for the Board of Bar Admissions and a member of the Mississippi State-wide Judiciary Computerization Committee. Mrs. Gordon also worked with chancery and circuit clerks across the state.

"She was responsible for more changes in three years in the clerk's office than had occurred in the entire time since it had been in existence," Whitten said.

Mrs. Gordon also helped the

It's terribly difficult to run a company with money, but it's virtually impossible to

court develop a proposal for an intermediate court to aid the backlogged Supreme Court, said Justice Michael Sullivan.

Her work in computerizing the high court's docket and files to track appeals brought her recognition from the National Association of Appellate Court Clerks. Several states invited her to workshops to address the subject.

"She was the spark plug that made us go," said Justice James Robertson. "She just brought so many creative innovations to that clerk's office and was determined to make us the best in the country."

Mrs. Gordon, a smoker, had a history of heart trouble. She suffered a heart attack three years ago.

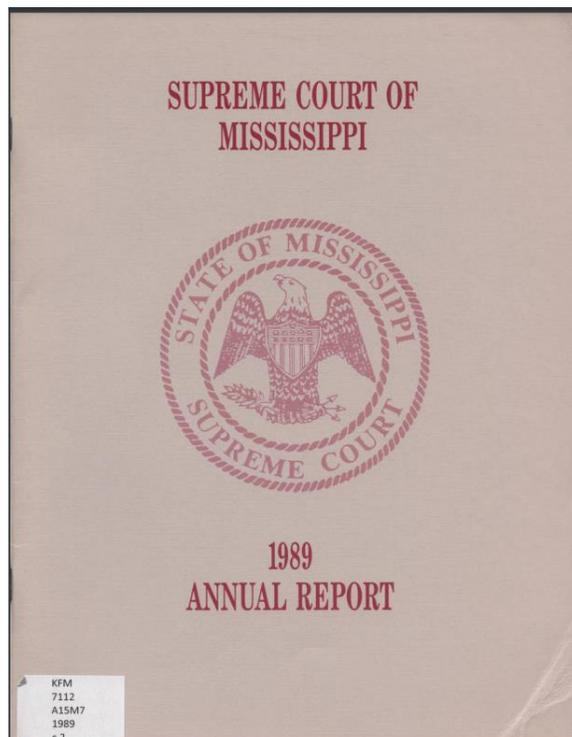
She complained to coworkers Thursday of a stomachache, but showed no apparent signs of illness.

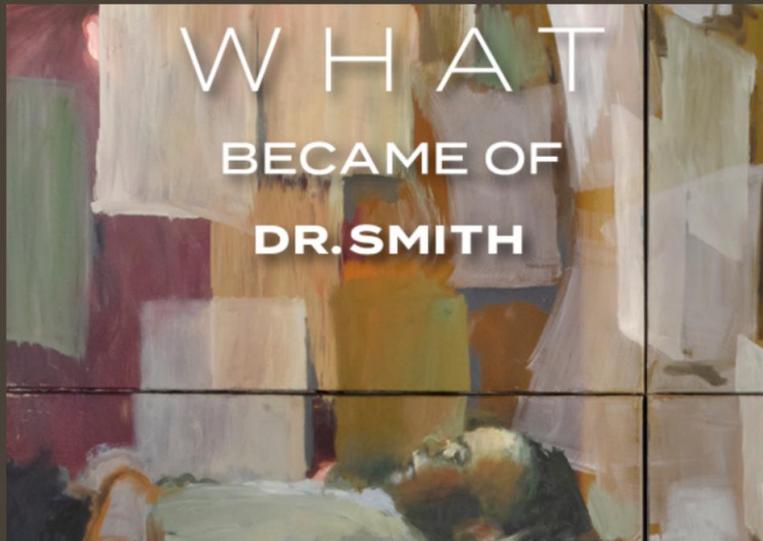
Justice Joel Blass described Mrs. Gordon as "a very, very dedicated and hard-working person. She was getting the courts records onto computer to know where everything was."

Roy Noble Lee said Mrs. Gordon will be sorely missed.

"We all loved her up there. We knew what her ability was and what she's done for the court. She was dedicated to it. That was her life. We'll miss her more than anybody can imagine."

Survivors include: husband, Dale; son, Mike Gordon; and daughter, Jacquie Gordon.





What Became of Dr. Smith, Mississippi Museum of Art, April 20 - September 22, 2024

Researching Dr. Smith

The Library's Role in *What Became of Dr. Smith*

What Became of Dr. Smith is a large-scale, panoramic narrative painting by Nashville-based artist Noah Saterstrom. The painting examines the life of his great-grandfather, Dr. David L. Smith, a traveling optometrist whose struggle with mental illness led to his commitment in the Mississippi State Hospital in 1925. Dr. Smith's life was then erased from family history. With the assistance of the State Law Library in locating and uncovering records, Saterstrom was able to bring Dr. Smith's story back to life.

Wednesday, September 18, 2024, 2:00 pm
Mississippi Supreme Court - First Floor Meeting Room

Through the use of court documents, historical records, and newspapers, State Librarian Stephen Parks will discuss the research process that went into piecing together the puzzle of Dr. Smith's disappearance.