

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT
FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

UNVEILING OF
THEIR STORY: THE LEGACY OF JUSTICE IN
THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2018

4:00 P.M.

1st FLOOR

COURTHOUSE

UPPER MARLBORO, MARYLAND

Khalilah I. Blyden
Official Court Reporter

P R O C E E D I N G S

The proceedings convened at 4:00 p.m., there presiding, The Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams, Administrative Judge for Prince George's County and the Seventh Judicial Circuit and Sondra D. Battle, Court Administrator.

MS. BATTLE: Good afternoon.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon.

MS. BATTLE: On behalf of the Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams, and the Judges of the Circuit Court, welcome to the unveiling of, Their Story: The Legacy of Justice in the Circuit Court for Prince George's County. It is such a pleasure to see so many family members, friends, and staff attending the celebration today.

I would first like to acknowledge several people, including Chief Judge Barbera, Court of Appeals; Judge Hotten, Court of Appeals; Judge Geter, Court of Special Appeals; all of the Judges of the Circuit Court; the Magistrates of the Circuit Court, Chief Judge Chasanow, Retired Federal District Court, Retired Judges, Senior Judges, Former Judges -- I don't see Judge Krauser -- and all elected officials and courthouse staff, thank you for being here today.

As the Court Administrator for Circuit Court, I had the opportunity to work under the leadership of Judge Missouri until his retirement in 2010. The torch

was then passed to Judge Adams as our next Administrative Judge.

Under her leadership, Judge Adams has initiated numerous programs and initiatives, but for the sake of time, I can only highlight a few:

The establishment of the Veterans Court, the Re-Entry Court, and the establishment of the Family Justice Center, to name a few, as well as the security enhancements at all of the public entrances throughout the courthouse.

One year ago today, Judge Adams had a vision to honor the judges on our Legacy Wall. One year later, to no surprise, we are here today to witness her vision being carried out. I can confidently say that when Judge Adams has an idea for a project, she will do everything in her power to ensure that it is carried out successfully.

(Audience applause.)

MS. BATTLE: So today, as we celebrate this occasion, I introduce you to the Honorable Sheila R. Tillerson Adams, and thank her for her leadership that she is providing to Circuit Court.

Judge Adams.

(Audience applause.)

JUDGE ADAMS: Thank you, Ms. Battle.

You know, leading this Court is a team effort. And I am blessed with a phenomenal team, a team of a phenomenal Administrator, Court Administrator, Deputy Court Administrator, administrative staff, and the employees that work in this courthouse, and just a wonderful group of judges that serve the citizens of this county.

So I am truly a blessed Administrative Judge. But today, I just want to say good afternoon to everyone. Good afternoon to everyone.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon.

THE COURT: And thank you for being here.

I first want to thank Ms. Tia Lewis, who is hiding whenever you mention her name, my Communication Specialist for the Circuit Court, Prince George's County, for coordinating this Legacy Wall today and assisting in making this vision a reality. Thank you, Ms. Lewis.

(Audience applause.)

JUDGE ADAMS: I also want to say thank you to you that are assembled here today, who responded so enthusiastically to our calls for information. I thank you.

Now, as I walk the halls of this courthouse each day, and I notice how the days, weeks, months, and years

have passed, I have marveled recently at how very few of us in this courthouse still know and remember the lives, faces, and contributions of the judges that have served on this bench and their lasting mark on this community. When I reflected on it, there were three moments in the last five years where that realization hit me like a ton of bricks.

The first was in a bench meeting where we had a passing conversation about Judge Loveless. And in that meeting, one of the younger judges said, "William D. Missouri is the only Administrative Judge I ever knew. I didn't know Judge Loveless." And I thought for a minute, I said, "Hmm, it has been 18 years, hasn't it."

Then the next was when the Prince George's County Bar Association, at a meeting, was awarding the James H. Taylor Award to Betty Hewlett. And again, there were many in the room who did not know James Taylor. And I thought, oh, wow.

And the third and most recent was upon the death of one of my mentors, Judge Chasanow, who retired from the Court of Appeals in 1996. And I realized then that there is a whole generation of lawyers that practice in this courthouse that are unaware of the proud legacy of justice that is contained within the walls of this courthouse.

And I asked myself why. It's not because their legacy is not impactful. No, not at all. Then it dawned on me, it's the nature of our profession. We don't tell our stories. Every day, as litigators, we tell everyone else's story, but we don't tell our story.

Who are judges? Judges are the ultimate public servants of our society and the most intimate public servants of any citizen.

Why? Because judges are appointed and elected to decide the most private matters of the citizens that we serve.

Think about it. Judges are trusted and entrusted to decide where and with whom a child should live, where a child should go to school, when you can see your child on visitation, if property should be sold, where a road can be built, if a candidate is qualified to run for office, whether people who love each other can get married, how partnerships break up, medical malpractice disputes, business disputes, shareholder disputes, labor disputes, zoning disputes, personal injury disputes, juvenile causes, church disputes, constitutional questions, disputes between neighbors, murder cases, and any other issue that affects the lives, property or values of the citizens that we serve. Judges.

Judges are the keeper of justice. The judiciary is the engine that keeps society running. Ask yourself where society would be if issues were not resolved.

Now, there's an article written by Douglas E. Ray that discusses seven important roles judges play in our society, and I think it's important to repeat them here today.

Number 1. Judges are the link between our government, our laws, and our people.

Number 2. Judges are the face of our justice system in the means of citizens that appear in our courts each and every day. Many times, the way a citizen is treated when they come into a courtroom can restore their faith in the basic systems of democracy.

Number 3. Judges are the faces of fairness in our society.

Number 4. Judges are the decision-makers. Disputes need to be ended in our society for society to move on.

Number 5. Judges serve our society as a teacher. Think about it, each and every day when you're in your courtroom, case after case after case, particularly with self-represented litigants, judges are looked to for guidance and lessons. And many times, judges give citizens the blueprint to guide their future

actions. Judges are teachers.

Number 6. Judges are lifelong learners. Any judge knows exactly what I'm talking about. Lifelong learners. The law is constantly changing, evolving, adjusting, confirming, and judges must stay abreast.

And Number 7. Judges are community role models. Judges are role models in the community because they are looked upon and admired for their role of making order out of chaos and solving the important problems that are brought before them each and every day.

So here, in Prince George's County, we are fortunate to have a proud and rich judicial history, a judiciary that is rooted in the fabric of this great community and has influenced it in ways that are far beyond the stories that will be shared here today.

So if we just take a minute to reflect back on this courthouse 58 years ago. Now, I know for some of you, 58 years seems like a lifetime. But for me, it's not. But 58 years ago, this was a one-judge courthouse. A one-judge courthouse.

That one judge soon got appointed to serve on the Court of Appeals, the Honorable Charles Clagett Marbury. But while he was here, he dispensed justice in this county calling the docket. And some of us remember the call of the docket very vividly and trying cases

sometimes into the wee hours of the morning.

His influence has a lasting effect on the community, as two of his former law clerks graced the walls of this hallway, the Honorable James Salmon, and the Honorable Joseph Casula.

However, today, in this courthouse, many just call that name because it's the Circuit Court wing of the courthouse. It is the Marbury Wing for a reason; because he served this community as a judge.

Now, between 1960 and 1961, three more judgeships were created in Prince George's County. So now there were four; Judge Powers, Judge Parker, Judge Loveless, and Judge Bowie.

Now, in the '60s, Prince George's County was a much different community than it is today, but even then, times were changing. Before Judge Bowie took the bench, he was counsel for the Towns of Upper Marlboro; Glenarden and Seat Pleasant.

When he took the bench, the representation of Glenarden and Seat Pleasant was taken over by James Taylor who subsequently became the first African American Assistant State's Attorney, integrated the town's eating establishments, along with Bud Marshall, and became the first African American judge appointed to the Circuit Court.

Then there were clerks of these judges that also became fine jurists themselves. Like, Judge McKee, who clerked for Judge Bowie; Judge Platt and Judge Nichols, who clerked for Judge Loveless; and retired Federal Judge Alexander Williams, Jr., who clerked for Judge Taylor, just to name a few.

Then there's stories of justice and what really -- and what justice really looked like and felt like in this county, even during the most turbulent trials.

I recently heard Reverend Perry Smith, a trailblazer in this county in his own right, relay this story of Judge Jacob Levin during a hearing for Terrence Johnson, after the shooting of two Prince George's County police officers at the Hyattsville Police Station.

Reverend Perry Smith was at the hearing, and he spoke on behalf of Terrence Johnson, but after the hearing, he was stunned when the Judge ordered that he ride in the police wagon with Terrence Johnson to the jail.

He went on to say that years later, he ran into the judge, along with his wife, at the Prince George's Plaza. I know that was awhile ago, because it's no longer called Prince George's Plaza, but he ran into him

at Prince George's Plaza, and they remembered each other.

The judge told him that he always wanted to see him again because, even though he did not agree with his argument, he respected him. The judge felt that he had to order that he ride with Terrence Johnson in the wagon that night because that was the only way the judge could ensure his safety; an example of justice in ways that most will never know.

So today, we unveil this Legacy Wall for all of you, and to read about the lives and service of the men and women of the Judiciary of Prince George's County that have served this community so diligently.

One judge, to twenty-four judges strong today. From the first woman judge, Audrey Melbourne, to the first African American woman judge, Judge Michele D. Hotten, to the first African American Administrative Judge, William D. Missouri, to the founder of the Boys and Girls Club for Prince George's County, Judge Mathias, and all the fine jurists that have served this county and graced the now blue robe for their legacy, and to their family and friends, we say thank you. We are a better society here, in Prince George's County, because of their service to this community.

And the judges that grace this wall and have

served this community since Judge Marbury went to the Court of Appeals are Judges:

Sam J. DeBlasis, Roscoe H. Parker, Robert B. Mathias, Ralph W. Powers, James F. Couch, Jr., William B. Bowie, Samuel W.H. Meloy, James H. Taylor, Albert T. Blackwell, Jr., Howard S. Chasanow, Jacob S. Levin, Ernest A. Loveless, Jr., James Magruder Rea, David Gray Ross, James P. Salmon, William H. McCullough, Audrey E. Melbourne, Vincent J. Femia, Sylvania W. Woods, Arthur M. Ahalt, Robert H. Mason, Darlene G. Perry, G.R. Hovey Johnson, Theresa A. Nolan, Joseph S. Casula, Robert J. Woods, James J. Lombardi, Steven I. Platt, William B. Spellbring, Jr., E. Allen Shepherd, Graydon S. McKee, III, Richard H. Sothoron, Jr., Ronald D. Schiff, Michele D. Hotten, William D. Missouri, Thomas P. Smith, A. Michael Chapdelaine, Sherrie L. Krauser, Julia B. Weatherly, Maureen M. Lamasney, Michael P. Whalen, Larnzell Martin, Jr., Melanie M. Shaw Geter, Erik H. Nyce, C. Philip Nichols, Jr., Albert W. Northrop.

(Audience applause.)

JUDGE ADAMS: As we unveil, you will see the photos of the Judges that have retired from the Circuit Court bench. These photos were placed in this hallway during Judge Missouri's tenure as Administrative Judge. At that time, not even half of this wall was full, but

over the years, as you walk by, to some, they just became faces.

So today, each has a bio, not to exceed 250 words, to give all that come a short glimpse of their legacy. Along with that, we have created a virtual Legacy Book that will be on the Court's website, that could receive unlimited information for all to read for generations to come. So submit your stories, your memories, your special case moments. The legacy of their law clerks, and so much more. Let's tell their stories.

(Audience applause.)

JUDGE ADAMS: We will now have the unveiling of, Their Story: The Legacy of Justice in the Circuit Court for Prince George's County.

And the bios of all our judges.

This will continue for every judge that retires from this court. Thank you.

(Audience applause.)

JUDGE ADAMS: And over here is an explanation of how you can submit more information to our website. So the instructions will be here for any member of the public, or bar, or anyone to submit information so that we can continue to update our Legacy Book.

So with that, that concludes the official

ceremony. Please browse and read the history and the stories of the Judges of the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, and we have a reception to follow.

I want to thank each and every one of you for coming. This means so much to us, to the Court, and it also gives us an opportunity just to share in the lives and remember the legacy that they have left for us, because each one of these judges had sometimes 20, 30 law clerks that go on and have done wonderful things and have been influenced in many ways from their practice and from their experiences serving on this court.

So I want to thank you for coming. And please, enjoy and read their bios. Thank you.

(Audience applause.)

JUDGE ADAMS: Also, I missed one thing. To draw your attention to the program, I want to give special thanks to the many people that contributed to Their Story. You know, we had to make a lot of calls. People sent their bios in. And we really want to thank everyone for answering the calls and assisting with that. Their names are listed here in the program. So thank you.

(Audience applause.)

(Proceedings concluded.)