

ALABAMA COURT NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM

VOL. VI NO. 1

SPRING 1998

JUDGES PRESENT HEFLIN WITH AWARD OF JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE

Former U.S. Sen. Howell T. Heflin was presented Jan. 22, 1998, with the first-ever "Howell T. Heflin Award" by the Unified Judicial System. Justice Heflin, a former chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, received the award at the Midwinter Circuit and District Judges Conference in Montgomery. Chief Justice Perry O. Hooper Sr. and Former Chief Justice C.C. "Bo" Torbert Jr. presented the award to Heflin. The President of the National Judicial College, Robert A. Payant, a conference speaker, also offered his congratulations to Justice Heflin.

The award will be an annual presentation at the Judges' Mid-Winter Conference.

During the presentation, Chief Justice Hooper said, "The Award of Judicial Excellence is a way of recognizing and honoring the highest achiever in the judiciary each year. The award is named in honor of Justice Howell Heflin because he did more to advance the judicial system and the image of a judge in the state of Alabama, than anyone has ever done.



Former Chief Justice Howell Heflin, center, receives the Award of Judicial Excellence from former Chief Justice C.C. "Bo" Torbert Jr., left, and Chief Justice Perry O. Hooper Sr.

Justice Heflin took the oath of office as Chief Justice of Alabama on Jan. 19, 1971. While in office, Justice Heflin began the arduous task of bringing Alabama's antiquated court system into the 20th Century. His judicial reform package, known as the Judicial Article, has been hailed as a model for the nation and has been studied by numerous state courts.

"Former Chief Justice of the United States Warren Burger called Heflin 'One of the most progressive and outstanding state chief justices in the country.' And in 1975 the New York Times headlined 'Alabama has become

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**TOP
COURT REPORTERS**

(Nineteenth Circuit)

Carol Fain
Deborah M. Sharman

(Twenty-Eighth Circuit)

Faye Curtis
Montasue Smith
Jane Kuglar

Lou Ann Schell

(Third Circuit)

Andrew J. Clingan, Jr.

(Fourth Circuit)

Ann Armstrong
Luther Neal Clingan

(Second Circuit)

Roy Dunham, Sr.

(Fifth Circuit)

Frances Roark
Frances Looney
Melanie Garner

(Ninth Circuit)

Lisa Hall
Trina Higgins

(Fortieth Circuit)

Ronald Pope
(Thirty-First Circuit)

Shelly Bishop
Vickie Gamble

(Twenty-Second Circuit)

Ronald Embry

(Thirty-Eighth Circuit)

Celeste Riddle

(Tenth Circuit)

Suzanne Frazier
Randall Murphree

Jerry Murray

(Eleventh Circuit)

Mike Watkins
Susan Rourke

(Thirty-Sixth Circuit)

Sandra Kiser

(Thirty-Seventh Circuit)

Janet Smith

(Thirteenth Circuit)

Cinda Underwood

(Fifteenth Circuit)

Jacqueline Brown

Jan Goss

Dub Harris

Laura Hendrix

Mary Lambert

Melody Pennington

(Eighth Circuit)

Scott Clark

Darrell Hale

(Fourteenth Circuit)

Barbara Higgins

Billie Johnson

TOP COURT REPORTERS HONORED

Special Report from the Court of Criminal Appeals

At the Court Reporter's Mid-Winter Conference in Montgomery on Jan. 21, 1998, Presiding Judge Francis A. Long Sr., and Lane Mann, clerk, both of the Court of Criminal Appeals, presented 38 official court reporters from around the State with special certificates of appreciation. These 38 court reporters were honored because of their timeliness in filing appellate transcripts with the Court of Criminal Appeals in 1997.

Presiding Judge Long and Mr. Mann were part of a panel which included Judge Sharon Yates and John Wilkerson, clerk,

both of the Court of Civil Appeals, and Hunter Slaton, director of AOC's Finance Division. This panel spoke with court reporters and answered questions about procedures applicable to the preparation and filing of transcripts in appellate proceedings.

Mr. Mann noted that 1,383 transcripts were prepared and filed by 201 different court reporters in connection with various cases that were appealed to the Court of Criminal Appeals in 1997. The average completion time for these 1,383 transcripts was 65 days from the date of the notice of appeal, and the average size of the record on appeal in each of these cases was 2.68 volumes.

Of the 201 court reporters who filed transcripts in 1997, 38 court

reporters from 94 of the judicial circuits were singled out for special recognition by the Court of Criminal Appeals based on their outstanding performance in at least one of the separate categories, including timeliness and volume. Only those court reporters who had average transcript completion times of 56 days or less were considered worthy of special recognition.

Among the 38 court reporters who were specially honored were the state's best court reporters in terms of number of transcripts filed in criminal appeals. First in this category was Randall Murphree of Jefferson County who filed 41 transcripts in

(Continued on next page)

ALABAMA PLAYS HOST TO NATION'S CHIEFS



Chief Justice Hooper and wife Marilyn bid farewell to the Conference participants.

Mobile Bay's Point Clear was the setting for the 21st Annual Conference of Chief Justices held Jan. 25-29, 1998, at Marriott's Grand Hotel. The Alabama site was chosen several years ago, and Chief Justice Perry O. Hooper Sr., and his wife, Marilyn, included a historical element to the conference. The Hoopers invited the attendees to tour some area

homes, one of which belongs to former Congressman and Mrs. Jack Edwards. Mrs. Edwards is a student of history from the area and entertained guests with stories of the eastern shore.


Chief justices from 44 states attended the conference as well as several federal appellate judges. Welcoming remarks came Sunday evening from Gov. Fob James, Chief Justice Hooper, and the Conference president, Chief Justice Tom Phillips of Texas. Jerome J. Shestack, president of the American Bar Association, also addressed the gathering.

The education program featured various speakers, such as John Curtin of Massachusetts, who chairs the American Bar Association Coalition for Justice; Jack Sweeney, director of the ABA's Office of Justice Initiatives; and Alabama Associate Justice Harold See Jr. Topics addressed

included "Public Trust and Confidence in the Judiciary," "Access to and Fairness in the Courts," "Federal Funding in the State Courts," and "Courts, Children and the Family."

Spouses and guests were treated to a tour of historic homes in Fairhope, Montrose and Mobile, a visit to the Mardi Gras exhibit in Mobile's City Museum and a shopping spree in the Riviera Centre in Foley.

All participants attended an interesting "Evening with Thomas Jefferson" hosted by the Mobile Bar Foundation at the Mobile Convention Center.

"We had a great opportunity to showcase Alabama, and the comments from the conference participants gave us reason to be proud of our state and the warmth of our people," Chief Justice Hooper remarked at the conclusion of the conference. 


("Court cont. from page 2)

1997, totaling 209 volumes. Mr. Murphree's average completion time was a remarkable 34 days. Second in this category was Scott Clark from Morgan County. Mr. Clark filed 29 transcripts, totaling 63 volumes, in an average completion time of 54 days. Third was Suzanne Frazier, also from Jefferson County. Ms. Frazier filed 28 transcripts, totaling 147 volumes, in an average completion time of 54 days.

Judge Long, commented to the court reporters that through automation, his Court now has

more information available about individual court reporter performance and his Court is better prepared to determine which court reporters are justified in seeking extensions as opposed to those court reporters who routinely request the maximum extensions available in every appeal. For this reason, Judge Long said that his Court will continue to evaluate how requests for extensions are treated and how delinquent filings are dealt with, which may result in some significant policy changes by his Court in the future. In this regard, Judge Long encouraged all court reporters to make every

effort to file their transcripts with the circuit clerks as soon as they are completed. Judge Long also dispelled any misconceptions that court reporters are required to wait until the actual due date before filing appellate transcripts with the circuit clerk.

Judge Yates commented that she felt it was a great idea to specially recognize court reporters for their outstanding service and promised that her court would have certificates prepared for next year's program. 

AUTOMATION OF PROBATION OFFICERS NEARS COMPLETION

Have you missed seeing the probation officers in the circuit clerk's office? Have you noticed that criminal cost collection has been improving? The answer to these questions is yes, thanks to the automation project of the Board of Pardons and Paroles. The automation project allows probation officers "view only" access to court records and automatically notifies them whether their clients have or have not made a court ordered payment.

In 1995, the Board of Pardons and Paroles and the Administrative Office of Courts (AOC) received a three-year grant under the National Criminal History Improvement (NCHIP) Program. The purpose of this project was to include data collected by Adult Probation Officers in the state and national criminal history files. Now in the third year of the project, the grant funded activities are being concluded and have been successful.

Currently, 50 of the 52 field offices have been automated. The remaining two offices will be completed this month. Adult probation officers now have a system that allows them, for the first time, to monitor all clients in their custody. This monitoring includes all scheduled appointments, drug tests,

community service, employment conditions and court ordered payments. Many courts have reported an increase in circuit criminal collections because of the automatic court ordered payment monitoring feature.

Bibb County, the first site to be automated, has reported a 300% increase in collections since the system was implemented in 1995.

Don Parker, project director for the Board of Pardons and Paroles said, "The automated system we have is tremendous and I believe it is the only one in the country that is so closely tied into the court's data base. Chief Justice Hooper and Frank Gregory have been tremendous in their support and I cannot adequately express our thanks to them and the court system."

The Unified Judicial System has benefited from more than the increased cost collections. The grant included funds that were used to assist in the recent upgrade to the AOC mainframe processor. The mainframe upgrade benefits every user of the system with improved response time for both on-line and batch jobs. ⚖️

Probation Officers of the Year



Standing from left, District Judge Tanya J. Gregory, Sumter County, Ronald Rollins, juvenile probation officer, Bibb County, and Robert Matthews, Regional Coordinator, Alabama Department of Youth Services in Montgomery. Also present is Jan Autrey, Director of Probation Officers of the Year, Alabama Department of Youth Services in Montgomery.

Ronald Rollins, juvenile probation officer, Sumter County, was named Probation Officer of the Year for Sumter County, Alabama, Department of Probation Officers of the Year on Dec. 4, 1997. The award was presented by Jan Autrey, Director of Probation Officers of the Year, Alabama Department of Youth Services in Montgomery. Robert Matthews, regional coordinator, nominated Mr. Rollins in recognition of his service since 1981 to Sumter County District Court. "So many officers in the rural area are overlooked for the exceptional work they perform. I have been impressed with the level of commitment Mr. Rollins has exhibited to reduce the crime intervention program. He was at the Kilby Prison Tour, a special event and Sumter County Court of Youth Development Meeting," said. ⚖️

PERSONNEL PROFILE: Aubrey Ford

BY JACK CAMPBELL

When asked to describe her boss of 20 years in one word, Cassandra Daniels said of Judge Aubrey Ford Jr. "honorable." Judge Ford, a District Judge in Macon County, was appointed by Gov. George Wallace on Sept. 2, 1977. Since then, he has heard juvenile, small claims, traffic, district civil and a myriad of other cases.

In his role as juvenile court judge, Judge Ford is characterized as both compassionate and approachable. "Many of the juveniles who come before Judge Ford keep a rapport with him, regardless of the outcome of their cases," Ms. Daniels said. Some write to him and others even continue to visit him. The judge has a reputation for being modest, soft-spoken and slow to anger. Ms. Daniels points out that, "he


gives you a duty and lets you go with it and respects your opinion on things." Ms. Daniels went on to say, "Perhaps one of his most admirable traits is that he accepts constructive criticism."

A fellow juvenile judge, now retired, John W. Davis III of Montgomery, said that even though Judge Ford is a native of Philadelphia, "he has assimilated well to Alabama, its people and its problems." Judge Davis added "Aubrey is so well thought of in and out of Alabama, that he is in great demand as a speaker and/or panelist for conferences held all over the country." According to Judge Davis, Judge Ford is a real student of the law and its application.

Judge Ford has an impressive resume. He currently serves as President of the Macon County Bar Association; President of the Board of Directors of the East Alabama Task Force for Battered Women; President of the Alpha Nu Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.; Member of the Board of Directors of the National Center

for State Courts; Second Vice-President of the Alabama Juvenile Court Judges Association; Member of Supreme Court Commission on Dispute Resolution; Member of AOC's Committee on Access and Visitation; Member of AOC's Court Technology Subcommittee.

Last year Judge Ford lost his educator wife, Doris, after a gallant fight with cancer. As a widower, he is raising three children. His oldest child, Audra, is a student at The University of Alabama. His 17-year-old son, Winston, attends Montgomery Catholic High, and 7-year-old Rimeek attends St. Joseph Catholic School. In addition to his judicial and fatherly duties, Judge Ford serves on the Board of Directors of the Tuskegee/Macon YMCA and is a deacon of the Greenwood Missionary Baptist Church.

The Alabama court system is blessed to have a person with Judge Aubrey Ford's credentials and human approach to solving problems serving on the bench. 


To suggest someone to be featured in the personnel profile, please contact Sheila Wall at AOC.

("Judges" cont. from page 1)

the most dramatic example in the country of what can be done without undue delay to improve the quality of justice in state courts.'

"When Justice Heflin left the bench in 1977, there was no congestion or backlog of cases in any of Alabama's courts, either trial or appellate. In addition, Justice Heflin played a key role in the continuous funding of the

State Justice Institute which provides funding for state courts and the National Center for State Courts."

In closing he added, "Later as a U.S. Senator, Heflin worked toward the modernization of the justice system. He continued his judicial reform efforts, directing them toward the federal judiciary." 



Justice Howell Heflin gives remarks after receiving the Award of Judicial Excellence.

COURT BRIEFS

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COURT BRIEFS

Judge Bishop Publishes DUI Book

Judge Brad Bishop, professor at Samford University's Cumberland School of Law and municipal judge for the cities of Hoover and Pelham, has written another book which should be of special interest to Alabama judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, court clerks and law enforcement officers. The book is entitled, *Drunk Drivers: The Law in Alabama*, and covers every aspect of Alabama law dealing with the prosecution and defense of DUI cases. The book contains an analysis of more than 300 court decisions establishing Alabama law on the subject. The book is being published by the Samford University Press. Information concerning the acquisition or a copy may be obtained by calling (205) 870-2757.

Other books written by Professor Bishop concerning court issues include *The Law of Shoplifting*, *Municipal Courts, 2nd edition*, and *The 1997 Supplement to Municipal Courts*.

Citizens to Mediate Judicial Problems

Lee County is looking for volunteers to participate in two pilot programs that, according to Lee County District Judge Richard Lane, "will do nothing but enhance the system."

The Lee County Judicial Volunteer Program is divided into two sections, juvenile conference committees (JCC) and district court mediation programs. The

JCC, according to coordinator Read Haughery, will each involve three panels of five or six socially and economically diverse members. At the start, they will be located in Auburn, Opelika and Smith Station. The pertinent juvenile offenses include criminal mischief, trespassing, shoplifting, theft, receiving stolen property, simple assault (without injury) and disorderly conduct. The sessions will be at night, to allow the attendance of the juvenile, parents, police and victims. The juvenile will go before the panel-in a neutral site, like the city school or library-on a voluntary basis. Similarly, the restitution, which can range from a written essay to community service, is decided by the panel and must be agreed upon by the juvenile and victim before a judge will approve the sanction.

While the JCC will not immediately affect the judges' time, the mediation portion of the program should. "Sometimes petty cases take up entirely too much time," said Lee County District Judge Mike Nix. "(The mediation program) is going to focus on criminal misdemeanors and small claims at a district court level," Haughery said. The defendant and victim will go to a neutral site with one or two mediators who will try to assist in reaching a settlement. Again, the solution must be agreed upon by both parties.

To learn more about these and other volunteer programs, please call Rich Hobson at AOC.

SMOKER'S BENEFIT

Did you know that the State Blue Cross/Blue Shield provides partial reimbursement of the purchase price of a term CQ and Nicorette when you successfully complete the Committed Quitting Program? On your first attempt you will receive 80 percent coverage, and 50 percent coverage for the second attempt. Call Committed Quitting at (800) 770-0708 to enroll. You are responsible for the entire cost of the product at the time of purchase, and you will be reimbursed by the State Blue Cross/Blue Shield upon successful completion of the program. Benefits are limited to Nicorette CQ and Nicorette gum.

MaterniCall

MaterniCall is a voluntary program offered by the State Blue Cross/Blue Shield for insurance carrier. It offers a way to identify high-risk pregnancies and manage them to prevent complications at the time of delivery. By participating in MaterniCall and notifying your carrier within the first trimester, a \$100 deductible will be waived. If you choose not to participate you are still responsible for certifying your hospital admission through the Hospital Review Program. As soon as a pregnancy is confirmed, the doctor or the doctor should call Materni Care at (800) 551-2344. A Materni Care nurse will assist you regarding ("first" on next page)

Life on the OUTSIDE

BY LYNNE KITCHENS

The day following my December 1 going-away festivities, my husband and I moved 450 miles south to the Tampa, Fla., area to begin our kinder, simpler life-style. Having been "outside" for only three months, I offer the following observations:

1. Climate. At this latitude, the winter is about as cool as I care to experience. Christmas Eve was a balmy 75 degrees (swimsuit weather). New Year's Eve degenerated into sweatshirt (but not parka) weather.

2. Simplicity. Moving was purging. We sorted and discarded close to half of the accumulated clutter of 34 years of marriage and kept the essence.

3. Making a difference.

Now that our daily schedule is less confining, my husband John and I can devote more time to causes we want to support, the most important of which is being advocates for neglected and abused children. (As Florida is 48th in expenditures for services for these children but 17th in per capita income, our work is cut out for us.)


4. Scheduling. It's splendid to know that we don't have to participate in the daily rush hours unless we so choose; that we have time to return to creative projects kept on hold because of time constraints; and that we can vary our daily schedules as we please.

5. Activities. The computer is still as important in my life as it ever was for creative writing, editing and desktop publishing. I use it several hours most days, and when we start traveling, my laptop will be nearby.

6. The 8-to-5 grind. Frankly, I really enjoyed working for the judicial system and miss

the daily contact with colleagues. E-mail, however, lets me maintain contact, and a flexible schedule enables us to visit.

7. The final word. Like moving from the Midwest to the Southeast at age seven, leaving home to go to college, or getting married and moving to South America, this latest change offers new horizons and opportunities, and I am delighted to seize the day. We all have our goals in life, but the following observation by Ralph Waldo Emerson really hit home. "To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."

Lynne Kitchens is an attorney who worked for the Supreme Court and State Law Library for 14 years. 

COURT BRIEFS

("Briefs" cont. from page 6)

the pregnancy and the mother's medical history, and will contact the doctor to obtain additional medical information. Following the evaluation, the mother and her doctor are sent additional information about the program, along with a MaterniCall Kit which includes a journal and educational brochures.

Direct Deposit

In August 1997, a memorandum was mailed to all administrators

regarding a new procedure for direct deposit of payroll warrants. It became policy that full-time, permanent personnel hired on or after Sept. 1, 1997, would be required to apply for direct deposit of their payroll warrants at the time all other paperwork was completed as a new hire. This procedure has assured that employees earnings are available on pay day.

Part-time employees were not allowed to apply for direct deposit at that time. However, because of

the ever increasing delay of payroll warrants to designated locations, it is now the policy of the AOC to allow employees who are hired part-time, temporary or permanent, to apply for direct deposit if they are hired for a minimum of six months.

The six-month restriction is being imposed because the prenoting process for direct deposit can take 8-10 weeks (4-5 pay periods), depending on whether all information entered in the payroll

("Briefs" cont. on next page)

COURT PERSONNEL

Nov. 18, 1997 - Jan. 30, 1998

RETIREMENTS

A. Ted Bozeman, district judge, Lowndes County, retired Dec. 31, 1997. Judge Bozeman served in the Judicial System for 20 years.

Avis Forehand, court specialist III, Houston County circuit clerk's office, retired Nov. 30, 1997. Ms. Forehand served in the Judicial System for 21 years.

Patricia J. Hawk, court specialist III, Elmore County circuit clerk's office, retired Dec. 31, 1997. Ms. Hawk served in the Judicial System for 22 years.

Florence K. Howell, court specialist, supervisor I, Butler County circuit clerk's office, retired Dec. 31, 1997. Ms. Howell served in the Judicial System for 19 years.

Cain J. Kennedy, circuit judge, 13th Judicial Circuit, retired Jan. 26, 1998. Judge Kennedy served in the Judicial System for 18 years.

Robert A. Martin, special assistant to the Clerk of the Supreme Court, retired Dec. 31, 1997. Mr. Martin served in the Judicial System for

25 years. He served 23 of those years in the AOC.

Betty "Sue" Sewell, court specialist, supervisor II, Etowah County circuit clerk's office, retired Dec. 31, 1997. Ms. Sewell served in the Judicial System for 42 years.

Juanita H. Smith, court specialist III, Fayette County circuit clerk's office, retired Dec. 31, 1997. Ms. Smith served in the Judicial System for 16 years.

Bobby M. Spradlin, bailiff, Jefferson County, 10th Judicial Circuit, retired Jan. 30, 1998. Mr. Spradlin served in the Judicial System for 25 years.

Joe E. Weston, bailiff, Jefferson County, 10th Judicial Circuit, retired Jan. 30, 1998. Mr. Weston served in the Judicial System for 10 years.

APPOINTMENTS

Terri L. Bozeman, was appointed district judge of Lowndes County on Jan. 1, 1998,

to fill the unexpired term of A. Ted Bozeman.

Judson W. Wells was appointed district judge of Etowah County on Nov. 25, 1997, to fill the unexpired term of Christine J. Matrangola.

IN MEMORIAM

George Alexander Black, retired district judge, died on Dec. 9, 1997. Judge Black served in the Judicial System as a judge of the inferior and district courts from Oct. 12, 1961, until his retirement on Jan. 16, 1993. He is survived by his wife of 35 years, the late Bryars Black and daughter, Vee Vee Brown.

Drayton N. James, circuit judge, 10th Judicial Circuit, died Dec. 23, 1997. Judge James served in the Judicial System for 20 years. He is survived by his wife, Billie W. James, and daughter, Tracy L. James.

Judge James was a member of the Jefferson County Bar and the Alabama Judges Association. At the time of his death, he was Senior Warden of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Birmingham.

should be mailed to Betty Beville or Deborah Thomas in the Payroll Office of the AOC. If application forms are needed for direct deposit, please contact the Personnel Department.

(Continued on next page)

COURT BRIEFS

("Briefs" cont. from page 7)

system is valid data. If the information provided on the application is not valid, the prenoting process is much longer. Those temporary employees who desire to have direct deposit of

their payroll warrants, who are already employed and who have at least six months of employment remaining in the Unified Judicial System, should apply for direct deposit as soon as possible.

Any questions regarding this new procedure for direct deposit

MUNICIPAL COURT ADMINISTRATOR RETIRES

Sam Wingard, court administrator for Montgomery Municipal Court, retired Nov. 26, 1997, after serving 20 years. The following is an interview by Sheila Wall with Mr. Wingard during his final week as the court administrator.

Q. How has the Montgomery Municipal Court changed during the past 20 years?

A. During the past 20 years the caseload has increased dramatically. It seems more cases are involving violence. There is an increase in the prosecution of domestic violence cases because of the passage of the spousal abuse law.

Q. What will you miss the most about working for the municipal court?

A. I will miss the close friendships with staff and others



Angelo Trimble, AOC director, and Bettye King Dorsey, AOC staff, present Sam Wingard with an appreciation plaque.

throughout the state.

Q. What are your plans for the future?

A. I plan to take some time off and then actively work toward another job in a related field.

Q. How involved have you been in the Alabama Municipal Court Clerks and Magistrates Association?

A. The first annual meeting of

the magistrate association was in the Montgomery Municipal courtroom on May 20, 1989. We formed the original association of the Alabama Municipal Court Clerks and Magistrates Association. I was one of the first to graduate from the certification program on May 16, 1992.

Q. What do you consider your biggest accomplishment during the past 20 years?

A. My biggest accomplishment was the revamping of the court scheduling system. The purpose of the new program schedule was to save the city from paying overtime by allowing the court to meet when the police officers were on duty.

COURT BRIEFS

("Briefs" cont. from page 8)

Judge Pearson Honored by Magic City Bar Association

The Magic City Bar Association paid tribute to the lifetime service and achievements of Circuit Judge J. Richmond Pearson at its annual scholarship banquet Nov. 25, 1997. The organization, comprised of metropolitan area attorneys, presented Judge Pearson with the highest award, the Scroll Award, during the event at Birmingham's Harbert Center. Since graduating from Howard University's School of Law in

1958, Judge Pearson has had a barrier-breaking career as a state senator, an assistant U.S. attorney and Jefferson County circuit judge. In many cases, he was the first black, or one of the first, appointed or elected to those positions. Judge Pearson plans to retire and will not seek reelection when his term expires this year. He was appointed to the bench in 1984. Proceeds from the annual fund-raising banquet help provide scholarships to minority law students attending local universities.

Visit the Alabama UJS Web site at

www.alalinc.net/aoc

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- Certified Interpreters*
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Defensive Driving School for Spanish-Speaking Traffic Offenders

The Marshall County District Court has implemented a Defensive Driving School for Spanish-speaking traffic offenders effective Dec. 3, 1997.

For a number of years, the court has worked with former Alabama State Trooper Sgt. Larry Hardin providing a remedial traffic school for English-speaking drivers.

With the increase of Spanish-speaking people moving into Marshall County, there has been an increase in traffic accidents and traffic offenses involving Spanish-speaking drivers. Most often, these offenses are for driving without a license, failure to yield, improper turning, etc. The Court has become increasingly aware of this problem firsthand since 1993 upon taking office.

In 1996, several agencies, the Marshall County Board of Education, police departments, health officials, local industries, and Spanish-speaking community

Goals of the Traffic School

1. To promote public safety on the highways.
2. To aid Spanish-speaking drivers in obtaining a proper driver's license.
3. To educate the Spanish-speaking community to area laws and customs.
4. To allow Spanish-speaking drivers the same opportunity to attend defensive driving schools as granted English speaking drivers.

representatives met to discuss issues of concern regarding traffic problems as well as other areas.

Concurrently, the Rev. Bob Caufield, Cullman, a retired Methodist missionary to Ecuador, began to inform Marshall County area churches about difficulties the Spanish-speaking community were having regarding local laws and customs.

After becoming aware of these problems, the North Alabama Methodist Conference

held meetings in Albertville District to discuss the issues. Judge Tom Dewey, member of Hewett, Belmont, United Methodist Church, met with the area Methodists ministers in Albertville. An agreement was reached that the Methodist Church would work with the residents and the Court on local law enforcement for the type of traffic program.

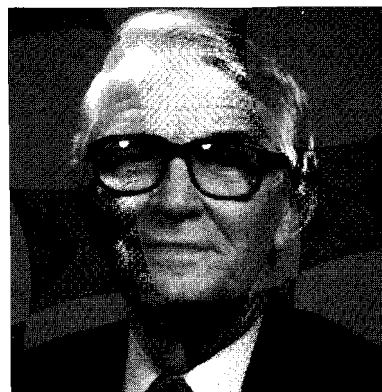
After many meetings with local police departments, Sgt. Hardin, mayor, insurance industry representatives, local Methodist leaders, Mrs. Dawn Prdia of the North Alabama Adult Education Program, Marshall County organized Spanish-speaking traffic school and the first session began Dec. 3, 1997.

At present, the school is held in Cullman in the Adult Education Center, North Street. The program fills a need needed to other cities in the county. 

A True Public Servant

On Aug. 15, 1997, a portrait was unveiled for Judge George Alexander Black in Geneva.

The civic center was full of over 100 citizens, co-workers, friends and neighbors who had known Judge Black for many years. The program consisted of heartfelt testimonials. People spoke of Judge Black as a man of integrity, honor, and a love for



life--the true heart of a public servant.

Judge Black retired in 1993 and the unveiling of the portrait, which is hanging in the Geneva Courthouse, was a small ceremony thanks to a man who had contributed significantly to the citizens of Geneva County.

On Dec. 15, 1997, Judge Black passed away.


CRIMINAL JUSTICE FACILITY OPENED IN BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham's new Municipal Justice Center opened Jan. 12, 1998, offering citizens more convenience and more efficient access to the criminal justice process.

Construction on the \$1.5 million-Municipal Justice Center, located at 801 17th St. North., began more than 12 months ago.

"Nationally, there is a trend toward isolating criminal justice buildings from general city operations in order to provide greater security for city staff and for the public at-large," said Mayor Richard Arrington Jr. "The city has spent the last few months evaluating the new building's security system and parking, and determining the best time for the Municipal Court to make the move so the court process would not be interrupted."

The new 20,600 square-foot center includes three court rooms and serves as the principal site for citizens to pay traffic and court fines. The Parole and Probation Department also will move from its present location in city hall to the new facility. The new facility also includes six windows for payment of fines; an attorney's conference room directly adjacent to the courtrooms; and secured an area to transfer prisoners from the center to the city jail.

Mayor Arrington and the Birmingham City Council dedicated the David J. Vann Municipal Court Facility on March 4th. 

ALABAMA DRUG COURT ASSOCIATION MEETS


On Dec. 12, 1997, the Alabama Drug Court Association met at the Judicial Building in Montgomery. The audience included a vast array of disciplines including representatives from the prosecution, defense, court referees, substance abuse service providers, probation services, court referral officers, court administrators and drug court staff.

Several important issues were discussed. Topics included: developing community support for drug courts, asking the U.S. Attorney General to define the term "violent offender;" and the possibility of the Administrative Office of Courts (AOC) purchasing drug tests and utilizing the court referral officers to administer them to drug court clients and future funding of the drug court programs. Public support and participation with the drug courts is a central issue for the Association.

Currently, three drug courts are operating in Alabama (Mobile, Birmingham and Tuscaloosa) with three additional drug courts being planned (Montgomery, Guntersville and Ft. Payne).

The Department of Justice announced during the week of February 16 that limited funding

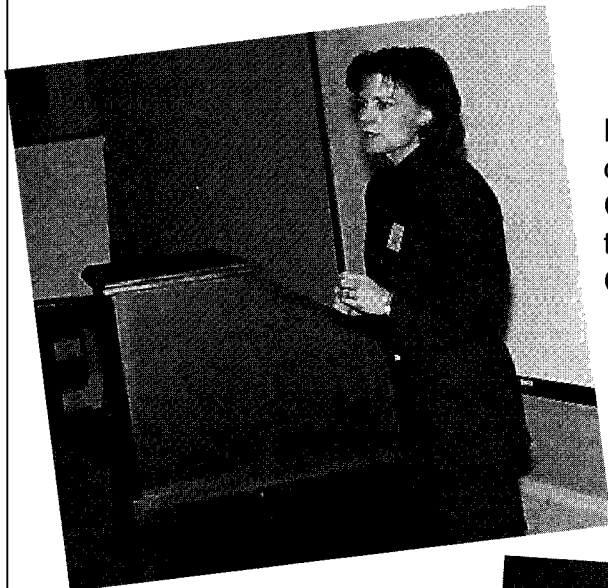
will be available during this fiscal year to plan and implement drug courts. The FY 1998 Drug Courts Program Office (DCPO) application kit is responsive to, and supportive of, developments in the drug court field. The application kit will continue to support single jurisdiction planning, implementation and enhancement of drug court grants. In addition, in FY 1998, DCPO has announced the availability of planning and enhancement grants for the planning and implementation of statewide, regional, or multi-jurisdictional drug court activity. Funding is also available to existing drug courts for single-focused innovations, such as information system development, evaluation or cross-disciplinary training.

The next meeting is March 12, 1998, at 10 a.m. in the large classroom of the Judicial Building. Anyone interested in the development of drug courts in Alabama is invited to attend. Please contact Keith Camp or Martin Ramsay at the AOC if you are interested in attending or require further information. 

SNAPSHOTS! from Courts



From left, Gov. Fob James chats with Chief Justice Jerry Cooper Sr., ABA President Jerome Shestack and Texas District Justice Tom Phillips.

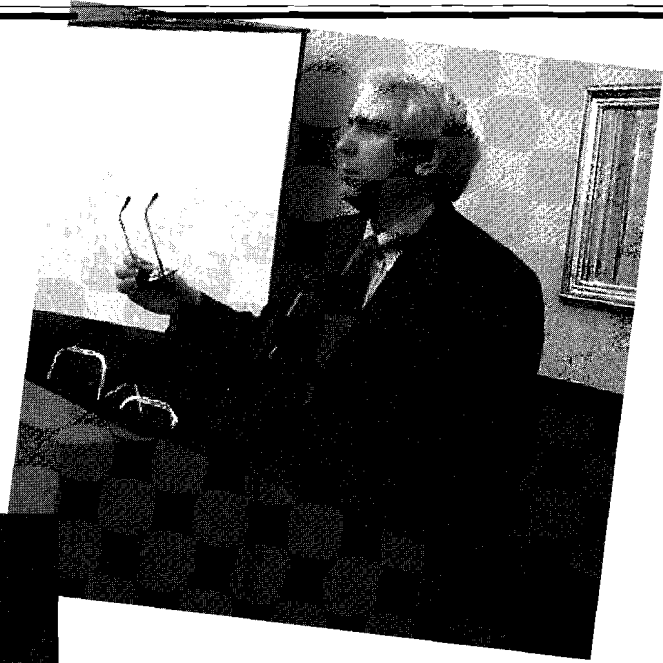


District Judge Lynn Clark Bright, chairperson of the Committee to Study Court Referral Programs, gives a report to the Judicial System Study Commission.

From left District Judge James Hill, St. Clair County, Presiding District Judge Ralph Grider, Jackson County, both are members of the Judicial System Study Commission, and Rep. Howard Hawk, D-Arab, member of the Committee to Study Court Referral Programs, attend a meeting of the Judicial System Study Commission on Dec. 10, 1997.



Supreme Court Associate Justice Harold See Jr. speaks to the clerks during their annual mid-winter conference.



Circuit clerks Mary Moore, Perry County, and Jack Pate, Pickens County, converse between sessions at the clerks' annual mid-winter conference.

Senate President Pro Tem. Dwayne Freeman, D.-Huntsville, speaks to the clerks during their annual mid-winter conference.



Court reporters Sherrie Thomas, and Susan Rourke, both of Florence, listen to remarks by Chief Justice Perry O. Hooper Sr.

SNAPSHOTS!

from the

Courts



Chief Justice Perry O. Hooper Sr.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF JUSTICE

The Alabama Judicial System Study Commission has requested that a committee be formed to examine sentencing practices in Alabama and to make recommendations to the Study Commission and the Legislature. Many of us who are concerned with sentencing feel that a careful study needs to be made with input from many sectors including all three branches of government. Attorney General Bill Pryor and I have discussed this recommendation and agree that we need to re-examine our current statutes and evaluate possible alternatives which could enhance the appropriateness and predictability of our sentencing system.

As chairman of the Judicial System Study Commission, I have appointed a committee for the review of sentencing practices and have requested that 44 persons serve as members of the important committee.

The members were chosen to represent the numerous and diverse groups affected by the sentencing process, including judges, district attorneys, sheriffs and police chiefs, legislators, court clerks, public defenders and concerned citizens. I have been assisted in this effort by the Attorney General.

Retired Circuit Judge and University of Alabama Law School Professor Joseph Colquitt of the 6th Judicial circuit (Tuscaloosa), will serve as chair of this committee. Judge Colquitt has extensive experience in the criminal justice and sentencing arena and his expertise will be invaluable. The first meeting is scheduled for March 20, 1998, in the Judicial Building. It is expected that the work of the committee will last about a year.

Questions or suggestions regarding the work of the committee should be directed to Frank Gregory or Angelo Trimble at the Administrative Office of Courts.



Alabama Judicial College Conference Calendar

•Municipal Court Clerk & Police Officials Regional, March 26-27, Quality Inn-Gulf Shores

- Circuit and District Judges Education Committee, March
- Municipal Orientation Part IV-A, April 3, Judicial Building-Montgomery
- AMCCMA Certification Institute, April 15-17, Alabama School of Law-Tuscaloosa

- Court Specialists Single Regional, May 13-15, Embassy Suites-Montgomery
- Advanced Leadership Institute, June 18-21, Quality Inn-Gulf Shores
- Judicial Assistants Annual Conference, June 24-26, Holiday Inn-Gulf Shores

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CHIEF JUSTICE
SUPREME COURT OF ALABAMA
PERRY O. HOOPER SR.

ADMINISTRATIVE
DIRECTOR OF COURTS
FRANK W. GREGORY

Alabama Court News is published quarterly by AOC's Public Information Office. It welcomes news about Alabama's courts and their programs, projects and personnel. To contribute ideas, please contact Sheila Wall at the Administrative Office of Courts, 300 Dexter Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104-3741, (800) 392-8077, (334) 242-0300 or E-mail: sfwall@alalinc.net.

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