



Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit

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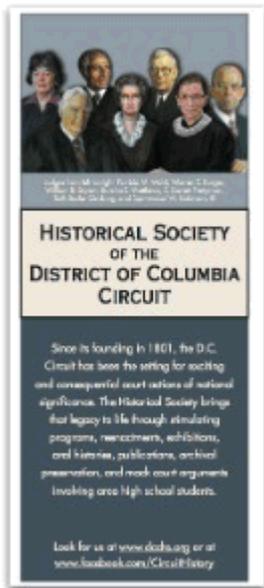
Madness or Badness: Duran and the Evolution of the Insanity Defense in the D.C. Circuit

Join us on Wednesday, April 11 at 4:30 when Francisco Duran, a man who at times claimed to be God and said he fired shots through the White House fence to remove a pernicious “mist” that hung there, will have his case and plea of insanity brought back to life in a compressed re-creation of the closing arguments by the two attorneys who presented them, then Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric Dubelier and Federal Public Defender for the D.C. Circuit A.J. Kramer. Sitting as the judge: Associate Professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law, Kimberly Brown, former law clerk to Trial Judge Richey. Stephen J. Morse, Professor of Psychology and Law in Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania, will describe the development of the insanity defense and its place in the criminal law; and Dr. Patrick Canavan, Chief Executive Officer at St. Elizabeth’s, will join the others in assessing the success or futility of changes Congress imposed following the John Hinckley case. Carl Stern will serve as Moderator.

The program will be held in the Ceremonial Courtroom of the E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse. A reception will follow. Everyone is welcome; no reservations are needed.

Take a Look at the Society’s New Brochure

Since its founding in 1801, the D.C. Circuit has been the setting for exciting



and consequential court actions of national significance. The Historical Society brings that legacy to life through stimulating programs, reenactments, exhibitions, oral histories, publications, archival preservation, and mock court arguments involving area high school students.

[Read about the Society's history in its new brochure.](#)

The newest oral history in the Society's collection



The lawyer who once said “conscious avoidance of boredom” was his career goal and who has been one of Washington’s busiest and most ubiquitous practitioners for more than 40 years recounts his colorful career in a newly released Historical Society oral history. John D. Aldock, chair of the D.C. office of Goodwin Procter, says the D.C. Superior Court is one of the best state courts in the country, and that D.C. juries get a “bad rap” as soft on crime or anti-business. He describes scores of tough assignments including the representation of Iran while it was holding U.S. hostages, protecting a big-tobacco whistleblower, defending against nuclear waste and asbestos claims, and saving law firms from their own clients. From his start in Washington as District Judge Youngdahl’s clerk and then a prosecutor, his is the story of the practice of law in D.C. in the 1960s, 70s and into the 21st century. Read it at www.dcchs.org



Featuring the Society's most active oral historian

Having recently started to take a fourth oral history for the Historical Society’s Oral History Program, Judy Feigin – a Society Board member – has set a record of achievement. Read some of the reasons for her continued involvement as an oral historian and how she approaches her work:

“My preparation generally involves getting background information from colleagues and friends of the interviewee, thinking about contemporaneous events which may have affected my subject, and determining which cases have been pivotal to his/her career so I can ask about the backstories. There is a tremendous satisfaction when an interviewee turns out to be entertaining as well as enlightening. And given the stature of the interviewees, this is a likely outcome. In addition to the satisfaction of knowing I have helped preserve a bit of history, the interviews have given me the chance to meet

people whose paths I might not otherwise have crossed. I have had the opportunity to learn, in the most delightful ways (both as interviewer and website consumer) about fascinating people and events related to my profession.”

On display

On display in the Courthouse: a likeness of the portrait of Judge Spottswood William Robinson III noting his many “firsts” – first African-American to serve as Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit; first to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court in a hearing that led to the historic decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which struck down racial segregation in the country’s public schools; and first in his Howard Law School class.

