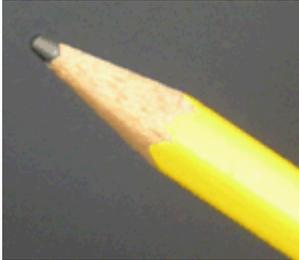




Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit

Newsletter # 18

January 2014



Searching for a Few Good Writers

If you would like to write and publish history, this is your chance. Lawyers, scholars, and others with interesting stories to tell – stories about the courts, the cases they try, and the people involved – may be able to see them published on the Society's website. We welcome your submissions. Send them to us at info@dcchs.org.



In Their Own Words – and Voices – on the Society's Website

You can hear [Judge Gerhard A. Gesell](#) as he is being interviewed for his oral history. Listen to the entire history and to his reflections on his life and times. You can also listen to short audio excerpts taken from the oral histories of Judges Harold H. Greene, George E. MacKinnon, and Aubrey E. Robinson, Jr.



The New Look of the Society's Mock Court Program

Each of the 100 high school students expected to participate in this year's [Mock Court Program](#) will be presenting arguments based on the same fictional fact pattern which concerns the use of GPS tracking devices in the context of the Fourth Amendment. The case echoes some of the issues raised in a case that worked its way from our District Court to our Court of Appeals and ultimately to the U.S. Supreme Court.

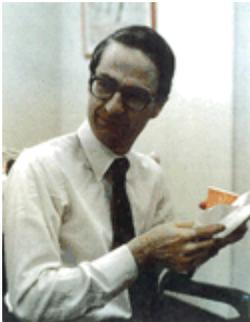
It's not too late to help the students prepare for their day in court by serving as a mentor. Contact Paras Shah at paras.shah@nteu.org



Judge Patricia M. Wald Receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom

In bestowing the Presidential Medal of Freedom on former [Chief Judge Wald](#), President Obama remarked, "When Patricia Wald's law firm asked if she'd come back after her first child, she said she'd like some time off to focus on her family – and then devoted almost 10 years to raising five children. But Patricia never lost the itch to practice law. So while her husband watched the kids at home, she'd hit the library on weekends. At the age of 40, she went back to the courtroom to show the "young kids" a thing or two. As the first female judge on the D.C. Circuit, Patricia was a top candidate for Attorney General. After leaving the bench, her idea of retirement was to go to The Hague to preside over the trials of war criminals. Patricia says she hopes enough women will become judges that 'it's not worth celebrating' anymore. But today, we celebrate her."

Oral Histories of Three Outstanding Lawyers



[Daniel "Mack" Armstrong](#)

If you are looking for a fly-on-the-wall view of government appellate litigation, you will want to read the oral history interviews of Daniel "Mack" Armstrong taken by Matthew Sheldon. Armstrong served for thirty-eight years in the general counsel's office of the Federal Communications Commission, mostly as Chief of the Litigation Division, arguing some 65 appellate cases, most of them in the D.C. Circuit. Although calling himself a "conservative Republican," Armstrong says he was a civil servant first and gives a lawyerly, nonpartisan assessment of the FCC under both Republican and Democratic presidents. His oral history is a case study of a federal agency and the judges who oversaw it in a changing regulatory environment.

[William H. Jeffress, Jr.](#)



Displaying a trial lawyer's wit and story-telling skills, William Jeffress recounts his judicial clerkships and 39 years of trial practice. In his oral history, Jeffress recalls that he missed studying for the bar exam because he was clerking for Judge Gerhard Gesell, who was wrestling with whether to issue a TRO in the Pentagon Papers case, and then missed oral argument of the appeal in the Supreme Court because he was taking the exam. He passed. He tells of hearing a summation so eloquent that even the court reporter cried. Of his representation of former President Richard M. Nixon, Jeffress, a Democrat, proves the consummate Washington lawyer, saying: "Everything, the powers of all kinds of institutions, were arrayed against him. And that's just the kind of person I like to represent." This fascinating oral history is the result of several interviews Professor Angela J. Campbell of the Georgetown University Law Center conducted between 2011 and 2013.

[Richard E. Wiley](#)

In Richard Wiley's readable oral history, he traces his career from army lawyer at the Pentagon, to general counsel, commissioner, and chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, and finally to private practice where he eventually founded one of the most prominent telecommunications law firms in the country.



He capped his career by chairing the advisory committee that made High Definition Television a reality, a fitting accomplishment for a high definition lawyer. The questions are asked by George Jones, a highly skilled litigator, who makes this oral history seem more like a conversation between friends. If you want to read two of the best lawyers in the city turn in a peak performance, this oral history is for you.



Now on Display

Serving for 20 years on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and Chief Judge for 13 of those years, [Judge Bolitha Laws](#) was a fierce champion of his court and a jurist who was noted for his many achievements including his deft handling of the indictment for treason of Ezra Pound. Judge Laws is remembered in an exhibit prepared by the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit which is on display on the first floor of the Courthouse.



Adieu but not Good-bye

After working with the Historical Society for seven years and helping us with everything we do, Doris Brown is retiring. As we thank her for her many contributions, her commitment, and her continued good humor, we wish her well and have let her know that we expect to see her at all Society events!