



Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit

Newsletter #32 - July 2017



[ORAL HISTORY NEWS](#)

A New Oral History: Robert Kopp, Esq.

[Robert Kopp](#) saw it all in his forty-five years in the Appellate Section of the Civil Division of the Justice Department: Ralph Nader's lawsuits; the mass arrests of Vietnam War demonstrators; Watergate and what it was like to be at Justice after the Saturday Night Massacre when President Richard Nixon fired the special prosecutor and the top two officials of the Justice Department; and the shifting roles of civil servants and political appointees. Kopp tells of his step-father, a line attorney at Justice, being the only one working on the afternoon of Sunday, December 7, 1941, when the Navy called with a message: "Please tell the Attorney General that the nation is at war." And he remembers being told of President Franklin Roosevelt calling a lawyer in the Appellate Division to discuss the draft Supreme Court brief he had been sent for review. But most importantly, Kopp describes how lawyers in the civil service serve the nation, doing "nuts and bolts" work, and how they preserve a coherent rule of law in the United States. Judy Feigin, one of the Society's most talented interviewers, does her usual, excellent job as interviewer and guide.

A Glimpse into Howard Westwood's Oral History

It was an emergency posing a grave threat to the national security. The President alone had the responsibility to save the country from its

enemies, but he had to act quickly. Would the Supreme Court let him? President Harry Truman waited with bated breath. Writer Genevieve Beske tells this [thrilling lawyers-tale](#), using the oral history Howard Westwood gave the Society about his role in *Youngstown Sheet & Tube* that delivered a “stinging rebuff” to Truman’s attempt to seize the steel industry in 1952.



Welcoming New Oral History Interviewers

Five lawyer-volunteers were coached in the art of taking full-life oral histories by skilled, veteran interviewers Judy Feigin and Steve Steinbach. Included in the group were four former law clerks to judges of the D.C. Circuit Courts – Michele Jones Coles, Susan McMahon, Serena Orloff, Barbara Thomas – along with Elizabeth

Cavanagh. Having been coached in how to take a comprehensive history and how to encourage candor while avoiding confrontation, among other things, most of the newly minted interviewers are already working with interviewees.

[THE DISTRICT COURT’S PORTRAIT COLLECTION GROWS](#)



The portraits of District Judges [Rosemary M. Collyer](#) (pictured right) and [Gladys Kessler](#) (pictured left) were

presented to the District Court recently and have been added to the Society’s on-line exhibition of judicial portraits. Take a look at the portraits and read about

the judges and the portrait artists.



[NEWS OF THE SOCIETY’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS](#)

The Board of the Historical Society elected and welcomed the following new Board members at its April 26, 2017, annual meeting:

Jodi Avergun, District Judge Tanya S. Chutkan, William S. Consovoy, John F. Cooney, William H. Jeffress, Jr., Adam Liptak, William B. Schultz, Kate Comerford Todd, and Elizabeth W. Wilkins.

The Board elected Eva Petko Esber to serve as Secretary of the Society.



LOOKING AHEAD

Coming this fall - Law Clerk Reception

Highlighting the Society's fourth reception for law clerks who served judges in the Courts of the D.C. Circuit - A multigenerational conversation on clerking will be

presented in the Courthouse Atrium featuring William H. Jeffress, Jr. and Amy Jeffress, both of whom clerked for District Judge Gerhard Gesell, and District Judge Christopher R. Cooper. **SAVE THE DATE:** October 26 at 5 p.m. Pictured at the left, Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli, Jr., addressing the law clerks (seated left to right, Chief Judge Garland and Judge Kavanaugh).

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