



# Court Historical Society NEWSLETTER



Eastern District of Tennessee

JANUARY 2008

## The Traveling Judge

In the days prior to 1939, when the Eastern District of Tennessee had only one judge, he had to do considerable traveling to hold court throughout the district.

Today, the district has five active district judges and two senior judges, and travel to hold court is seldom required, except for the occasional trips to Winchester to tend to the docket there.

Some insight to those earlier days is detailed in the oral history of the daughter of the late **U.S. District Judge George C. Taylor**, who was the last judge to sit as the district's lone judge before a second judgeship was created by the Senate.

**Mrs. Ellen Taylor Manson** of Chattanooga, the judge's daughter, gave the U.S. District Court Historical Society an oral history in August 1993, four years before her death.

Judge Taylor was a native of Greeneville but resided in Knoxville during his tenure on the bench, 1928-1949. He traveled from Knoxville to Greeneville and Chattanooga, generally for six weeks at a time to each city, to hold court, and from time to time to Winchester.



Judge George Taylor

"When he was at Greeneville and Chattanooga, he would come home on the weekends on the old 41 train," Mrs. Manson said. "He drove to Greeneville later when we had a car."

She said she and her mother sometimes went with the judge on his Greeneville trips when school wasn't in session. The family had roots there and knew the town and its people. They stayed at the Hotel Brumley, owned by the Taylors' good friends **Eva** and **Judd Brumley**.

Mrs. Manson said she was just a youngster and remembers

going to court sessions in Greeneville with her father. "I didn't have anything else to do, and I loved it," she said.

She recalled that during one of the judge's trips to Chattanooga around Christmastime, he was involved in a trial and couldn't leave, "so we got on the train and came down here--Mother, Jerome and me." (The late Knoxville lawyer **Jerome Taylor** was the judge's only other child.)

"We had Christmas at the Hotel Patton. I can remember Daddy would go in and slam the window and pretend like it was Santa Claus, and say, 'Go to sleep, children.'"

It was on one of the later Chattanooga visits that Mrs. Manson met the man who would become her husband, **Dr. Tim Manson**. They met through close friends of the Taylors, the late **Fred** and **Virginia Frasier**. The judge and Mr. Frasier were college roommates.

Judge Taylor stepped down in 1949 because of a heart condition. He died in 1952.

The Mansons' daughter, **Taylor**, is married to Chattanooga lawyer **Al Watson**, a member of the Court Historical Society. Knoxville lawyer **Alex Taylor**, also a member of the Court Historical Society, is the son of Jerome Taylor and the grandson of Judge Taylor.

**U.S. District Judge Robert L. Taylor** was appointed to succeed Judge George Taylor and resided in Knoxville. The Taylors were not related. In 1939, **U.S. District Judge Leslie R. Darr** of Sequatchie County was appointed to fill the district's newly created second judgeship, and he resided in Chattanooga. These two judges handled the business of the court throughout the district until 1961, when a third judgeship was created and **Charles G. Neese** of Paris was named to fill it. He established residence in Greeneville and handled the Greeneville and Winchester dockets. ■

## Commemoration of Notable Trials

Two Eastern District of Tennessee trials that made national news, one in 1962 in Chattanooga and the other in 1972 in Knoxville, are the subjects of commemoration efforts now under way.

They are the jury-tampering trial of Teamsters Union chief **James Hoffa** that took place in Chattanooga and the trial in Knoxville involving Tellico Dam and the snail darter fish.

The Chattanooga chapter of the Federal Bar Association is spearheading the Hoffa project, which will involve a number of the trial participants, including prosecutor **James Neal** of Nashville, retired **U.S. Marshal Harry Mansfield**, the only juror on the case who is still living, and an interview with **Mrs. Frank W. Wilson**, widow of the trial judge. The Court Historical Society is helping sponsor the project.

A professionally prepared DVD will be made telling the story of the trial, from the day Hoffa first came to town through his conviction. The program will be shown at the Sixth Circuit Judicial Conference, to be held in Chattanooga May 7-10.

In Knoxville on April 18, the University of Tennessee College of Law and the Environmental Law Association, composed of law students, will present a symposium commemorating the 1972 trial that held up construction of the Tellico Dam for years.

Many of the trial participants have been invited to the commemorative event. ■

## Judge Hastie Library

The library in the U.S. Courthouse in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, bears the name of a Knoxville native who rose to become the first black federal judge in America.

He was **William H. Hastie**, who was appointed to the federal bench in the Virgin Islands by **President Franklin D. Roosevelt** in 1937. Hastie was only 33 at the time.

In 1949, **President Harry S. Truman** named Hastie to the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals, the highest judicial position

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## Words of Compassion

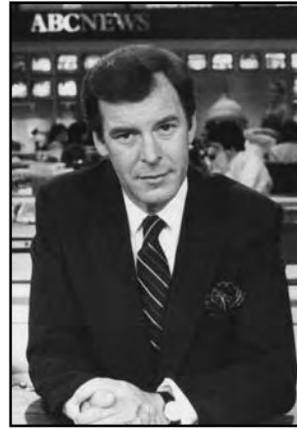
Ten days after ABC television anchorman **Peter Jennings** announced in April 2005 that he had cancer, **Judge Jarvis**, a cancer patient himself at the time, wrote Jennings a letter of support and encouragement.

We were given a copy of the letter recently by **Mary Lou Heath**, Judge Jarvis's longtime secretary. It was among the multitude of letters and documents in his chambers--items she was organizing in preparation for their being donated by the family to the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy. The letter provides some insight to the judge's thoughts as he dealt with the disease that eventually overcame him. He died last June.

The judge wrote, "I was saddened to hear that you have been diagnosed with lung cancer. I too was diagnosed with the same malady three years ago. I know from experience the worry and anxiety that you have experienced and will experience. Believe me that that will diminish over time - and there is time.

"I don't know whether you have a religious faith or not, but if you do, this can be of great comfort to you. You will learn to accept your fate after you get mad and get sad, and you will become closer to your family and they to you. Not only that but your friends will show their love and appreciation, which is of tremendous help. You will come to the realization that the most important things a man has are his family and his friends.

"I wish you the very best and am available in the event you want to talk to someone about the treatment or what to expect. May God be with you."



Peter Jennings  
Photo courtesy News Sentinel



Judge Jarvis

Jennings died in August 2005.

Judge Jarvis did not receive a personal response from Jennings, but after Jennings' death, the judge received one of the cards that the Jennings family sent to the anchorman's many admirers. It read:

"The outpouring of love and affection for Peter has touched us deeply. Our family is truly grateful for your letters, thoughts and prayers. Peter read as many as he could and was moved beyond words. So are we. We thank you." It was signed, **Kayce, Elizabeth and Chris Jennings**, his wife and two children. ■

## Historical Posters

Following is another in the series we are publishing about the large color posters distributed by the Judicial Conference of the United States and the National Archives and Records Administration in 1989 commemorating the bicentennial of the Judiciary Act of 1789. Titled "And Justice for All," the posters summarize specific cases reflecting federal court jurisdiction.

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### Bankruptcy

In the matter of Studebaker Corporation, Debtor

U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana  
Bankruptcy Case No. 1143

"...indebtedness to the staggering total of over twenty million dollars."

Opinion, January 28, 1935

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The darkest year in the history of the Studebaker Corporation, manufacturer of one of the finest automobiles in America, was 1933. The company filed for protection under the federal bankruptcy law, and its president committed suicide.

The future of Studebaker's employees, stockholders, and creditors was in the hands of the federal district court in Indiana as it decided bankruptcy case no. 1143. Would the judge order the company to shut down? Or would he approve a proposed reorganization which might save the company?

The court saved Studebaker from the auction block by approving the reorganization, and cars again rolled off the production line. Studebaker inaugurated a milestone second century of production in 1952. ■

## Judge Hastie Library *continued from page 1*

attained by an African-American at that time. He served on that court until he took senior status in 1971. He died in 1976.

At the ceremony dedicating the library in Hastie's memory, his portrait was placed in the entryway with an inscription outlining his service to the judiciary.

Hastie received his early education in Knoxville's public schools. The family moved to Washington, D.C., when he was about 10. There is considerable Hastie memorabilia housed in a special room bearing his name in the Beck Cultural Exchange Center in Knoxville, where African-American history is preserved. ■

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