



Court Historical Society NEWSLETTER *Eastern District of Tennessee*



JANUARY 2012

History-Making Grand Jury

“I am satisfied that up till this time this grand jury has performed more important work than any other grand jury in the history of the Middle District of Tennessee.”

These were the words of the late **Chief U.S. District Judge William E. Miller** in June 1964 to grand jurors as they concluded their service during which they indicted the late Teamsters President **James Hoffa** and six others on jury-tampering charges. [From the transcript of the court session.]

“This grand jury has returned indictments in cases having significance not only on the local scene, but having significance of a national character. Many of these cases have directly involved the judicial system itself--the judiciary--the integrity of the judicial system,” Judge Miller said.

“I think the results of your work are well known to everyone--the far-reaching character of it,” Judge Miller said. [At the time of this court session, Hoffa and three of his co-defendants had been convicted four months earlier, so the grand jurors were aware of the results of the indictments they had returned.--EDITOR.]

In that final session, the foreman of the grand jury told the judge:

It has been an experience that I am sure we will never forget. And this idea also was expressed [by members of the grand jury] that in certain areas of investigation we feel that very little has been accomplished, and a great deal more needs to be done, and we sincerely hope that it will be done.

continued on Page 2

Editor’s Note: In the November 2011 issue of this newsletter, we reported that the Court Historical Society had received for its archives documents from a member of the grand jury that indicted Teamsters President **James Hoffa** in Nashville in 1963. Since grand jury matters are secret and the public learns little about a grand jury’s work, we thought it would be worthwhile to give more detail about the documents, and we have done so in this issue.

The documents were donated by **J. Draper Keisling** of Crossville, a cousin of Knoxville lawyer **Jack Draper**, a longtime vice president of the Society. Mr. Draper arranged for the papers to be donated a short time before Mr. Keisling’s death last June at the age of 96. We are grateful to Mr. Draper for having done so.

New Officers

The Court Historical Society has selected a new society president and new vice presidents for the Northern and Southern Divisions.

Charles E. Atchley, Jr., Knoxville, deputy chief of the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, succeeds **Arthur G. Seymour, Jr.**, Knoxville, as president. Atchley also serves as a member of the board of the East Tennessee Historical Society.

Maryville attorney **Robert N. Goddard** succeeds Knoxville attorney **Jack Draper** as Northern Division vice president, and Chattanooga attorney **Marcia Eason** succeeds **T. Maxfield Bahner**, also a Chattanooga attorney, as Southern Division vice president.

Circuit Court **Judge Tom Wright**, Greeneville, continues as vice president of the Northeastern Division, and **Robert S. Peters** of Winchester continues as vice president of the Winchester Division.

Knoxville lawyer **Roy L. Aaron**, who has served as the Society’s secretary since its inception in 1993 and handles the Society’s official matters for the state and federal governments, continues in that post.

U.S. District Judge Curtis L. Collier, Chattanooga, as chief judge of the Eastern District of Tennessee, serves as honorary chairman of the Society.

We appreciate the long service of the departing officers and are grateful to those who are succeeding them, as well as those who are continuing to serve.

The Society’s mission is to promote and preserve the history of the Eastern District of Tennessee. ■



Mr. Atchley



Mr. Goddard



Ms. Eason

History-Making Grand Jury *continued*

Another grand juror, unidentified, spoke up:

It has been educational, enlightening, disgusting and time consuming.

Judge Miller replied:

I think that the remark you made about the character of the problems that you have had to deal with certainly strikes the right note.

You have had some things to come before you, I know, which have been most trying so far as all of you are concerned. It has been an experience which has required the very best of each one of you, and you have performed your duties in a magnificent fashion.

The jury-tampering charges resulted from a hung jury in a 1962 federal court trial in Nashville in which Hoffa and others were charged with violating a provision of the Taft-Hartley Act.

The subsequent trial on the jury-tampering charges was held in the federal court in Chattanooga and remains today as one of the most high-profile trials ever held in the Eastern District of Tennessee. The case was transferred to the Eastern District after Hoffa's legal team requested a change of venue. The late U.S. District Judge Frank W. Wilson tried the case.

Hoffa and three co-defendants were found guilty. Hoffa drew an eight-year prison sentence and the others were sentenced to three years in prison.

One of the defense attorneys also was jailed. Judge Wilson sentenced Jacques Schiffer of New York to 60 days in jail and fined him \$1,000 for criminal contempt of court for his "gratuitous and unconscionable attacks upon the court," wrote Dr. Patricia Brake, author of *Justice in the Valley*, the book published in 1998 by the Court Historical Society detailing the 200-year history of the Eastern District.

"United States Attorney General Robert Kennedy commended the prosecution team for the convictions; Hoffa had repeatedly claimed that Kennedy had a personal vendetta against him," Dr. Brake wrote.

The Kennedy Party

Attorney General Kennedy's interest in the Hoffa case was underscored in the 1992 oral history of the late Deputy U.S. Marshal Granville M. Sertel of Chattanooga. The interview was conducted by Don K. Ferguson, executive director of the Court Historical Society. A transcript of it is on file in the Society's archives.

Mr. Sertel said that on the day of Hoffa's sentencing, the Attorney

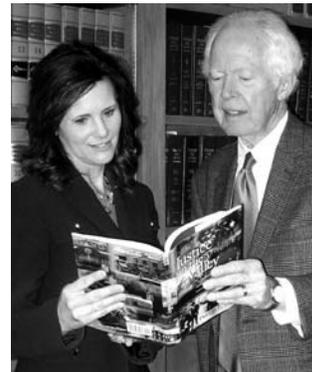
General held a party in his Washington home for several of the government officials involved in the trial. Mr. Sertel attended. The following is an excerpt from Mr. Sertel's oral history:

To hold down publicity--they didn't want anybody to know anything about it--they flew an old C-47 Coast Guard plane into Chattanooga--and after we landed in D.C., we all went up to the Justice Department. We later had a buffet dinner at [Robert] Kennedy's house. And Jacqueline [Kennedy] came over.

They had this big old shaggy dog and the kids were running all over the house, and it was just homey.

Mr. Sertel said another deputy marshal in Chattanooga, Chester Smith, and two deputies from the Nashville office also attended the party, along with the Eastern District of Tennessee U.S. Attorney at that time, the late Jack Reddy of Chattanooga.

Mr. Sertel said he at first told the Washington officials that he couldn't make the trip because he was providing security to Judge Wilson. But in the end, Judge Wilson insisted that he go. Mr. Sertel was on assignment to live with the Wilsons at their home during the trial and for a period afterward. ■



HISTORY FOR NEW CLERK--Debbie Poplin, newly appointed clerk for the Eastern District of Tennessee, receives a copy of Justice in the Valley from Don K. Ferguson, executive director of the Court Historical Society. The book, published by the Society in 1998, reviews the history of the court up to that time. Only about 100 copies remain. The price is \$25, plus \$4 postage if mailed.

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