



# Court Historical Society NEWSLETTER *Eastern District of Tennessee*

FEBRUARY 2011

## Oral History Notes

*The following excerpts are from three of the more than 50 oral histories that the Court Historical Society has conducted over the years. These histories are on file in the Society's archives in the Howard H. Baker Jr. United States Courthouse in Knoxville. Similar excerpts that we have published in previous issues have proven to be very popular with readers, so we are publishing additional ones here and will publish others in future issues. In some instances, the information is paraphrased for space reasons. --EDITOR*

Court reporter **Stanley K. Ford**, who served in the Knoxville office from 1955 to 1979. He died in 1998:

I didn't use a shorthand machine. I used a fountain pen and notebook pads. I always used a regular fountain pen that you had to fill up with ink every now and then. You didn't have to use as much pressure in your writing if you used a fountain pen. The machines were just beginning to become popular at about the time I joined the court.

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**Mary Wilbourn Johnson**, who served as a deputy clerk in the Knoxville office from 1945 to 1977:

The clerk's office used to handle the passport work. We took the applications at the counter and mailed all the paperwork to Washington to the passport office, and they issued the passport to the person.

We also filed bankruptcy petitions in those days. We processed the filing of the petitions in our office--checked to make sure they had the necessary signature and that they were filed in triplicate. We took the filing fee, made a docket sheet and placed the petitions in a stack, and the bankruptcy clerks would come down the hall to our office to pick them up.

After the bankruptcy court was finished with the case, they would close it and return it to our office and we would keep all the files until they were sent to the records center.

*[The practice of the district clerk filing bankruptcy petitions stopped in 1978. Since then, bankruptcy petitions have been filed with the bankruptcy court clerk.--EDITOR]*

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## The Society's Archives

The Court Historical Society has more than 1,000 files of historical documents that fill 10 filing cabinets, and the list of items grows weekly. This collection is indexed so that documents can be easily found. It's all part of the ongoing work of the Society. We thought you would find of interest the following sampling of items in the archives.

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- Documents and contracts from 1903 dealing with the construction of the historic federal courthouse in Greeneville, which was dedicated in 1905.
- A 1919 booklet dealing with the admission of attorneys to practice.
- A note **Helen Keller** wrote to U.S. Supreme Court Justice **Edward T. Sanford** in 1926.
- A file about Knoxville artist **Lloyd Branson**, who painted the 1925 portrait of **Justice Sanford** that hangs in the federal courthouse in Knoxville.
- Videotape and audiotape of **Edward R. Murrow's** 1956 television show "See It Now" about the desegregating of Clinton High School.
- Revised Rules of the Eastern District of Tennessee, dated September 1, 1960.
- Program from the 1966 dedication of the federal courthouse in Winchester.
- The 1978 book "Politics of Prosecution, the Trial of Otto Kerner." The trial was conducted by the late U.S. District Judge **Robert L. Taylor**.
- A copy of the warrant of arrest for **James Earl Ray** after he escaped from prison in 1977.
- The juror questionnaire used in the trials of **Jake and C.H. Butcher** in 1985.
- A history of the formation of the divisions within the Eastern District of Tennessee. ■

## Oral History Notes, *continued from pg. 1*

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U.S. Bankruptcy Judge **Ralph Kelley**, Chattanooga, who died in 2004:

I was a page on Capitol Hill for six years. I started with **Congressman Estes Kefauver** [who later became a U.S. Senator] at the age of 12 in 1940. My father and Estes were friends in Madisonville, where they both were from, and Estes appointed me his page. I went to school in the basement of the Capitol. We were paid \$15 a month and had to go to school at 7 in the morning, because we were going to work all day.

That work influenced me to become a lawyer. You can't be around a Congressman and not have some inclination to want to be a part of government and law. We were very fortunate. I remember that **Mrs. Roosevelt** was kind to us. She invited all of us pages to come down and have lunch with the President. And she did it once every year. ■

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## See Enclosed Report

Please review the enclosed Report to Members, which lists some of the Court Historical Society's accomplishments during 2010, work that could not have been done without your financial support. The Society's only source of funds is membership dues. Your support of the Society and your interest in the work that it is doing to preserve the court's history are much appreciated.

Members are encouraged to contact the Society for any historical information they need about the court and its personnel. We can help. And we ask that members make suggestions for any stories they would like to see published in the newsletter. We welcome suggestions. We also encourage members to contact the Society about any court-related memorabilia they have that they wish to be preserved or perhaps be donated to the Society or to some other historical organization. ■

## The Courthouse That Was Not Built



This is a drawing of the federal courthouse that was to have been built in downtown Knoxville in the mid-1990s. The plan was abandoned when the Whittle Communications building became available and the government bought it and converted it into the Howard H. Baker Jr. United States Courthouse. The building shown here would have been constructed on the site of the large surface parking lot across Cumberland Avenue from

the Whittle building and would have faced Gay Street. The proposed building, which was to have cost \$37 million, would have provided 150,000 fewer square feet than the Whittle building ultimately provided after the courtroom section was constructed. Yet the total amount of money the government spent, including the new construction, was \$37 million. This sketch was prepared by Barber McMurry Architects, Knoxville. ■