



First Female Majority in Arkansas Supreme Court History

When Court of Appeals Judge Rhonda Wood is sworn in as Arkansas's newest Supreme Court Justice on January 1, 2015, she will be part of the first female-majority Supreme Court in our state's history.

Wood said it is nice to know that she is the person who is changing Arkansas's history by creating the majority with her rise to the Supreme Court. "Now there is no question for young girls dreaming of practicing law or becoming a judge," Wood said. "It is absolutely possible to serve on the Arkansas Supreme Court. That wasn't necessarily true when I was young."

UALR Bowen School of Law Professor and Assoc. Dean Theresa Beiner said in an interview with KUAR that something frequently asked is whether the Supreme Court will decide cases differently. In the March 23 broadcast, Beiner said political scientists have studied this extensively.

"The answer to that question is 'No,'" Beiner said. "Women for the most part don't judge in a way that is appreciably different than their male counterparts... There's one caveat to that, ... and that's in sex discrimination cases, where you see women judges tending to vote more favorably for plaintiffs. Perhaps that is not surprising. They maybe



can identify a little more with the plaintiffs in those cases. But for the vast majority of cases we don't really see women judging in a way that's appreciably different from male judges. That perception has been debunked...."

Wood is running unopposed for State Supreme Court Associate Justice, Position 7 in the non-partisan election. Currently, there are ten states, including Washington, D.C., with female-majority supreme courts: Wisconsin, Washington, Tennessee, Ohio, California, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Washington, D.C., and the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. Texas has courts of last resort for

civil cases and for criminal cases.

In 1991, Minnesota became the first state that had a majority of women on its highest court. Well, technically, it was Texas in 1925. Staff attorney and public information officer for the Texas Supreme Court Osler McCarthy said, "The first all-woman Supreme Court in U.S. history was the court that was the Texas Supreme Court in 1925... [She was] appointed to hear one case over a trust matter involving a fraternal organization."

Women have been on the bench for years in Arkansas. Elsijane Trimble Roy (1916-2007) was the first female circuit judge when she was appointed by the governor in 1966. Currently, there are three women on the Supreme Court; two women on the Court of Appeals (of 12, and including Judge Wood); 19 (of 121) female circuit court judges; and 17 (of 116) women serving as district court judges.

On the Supreme Court, Betty Dickey became the first female chief justice when then-Governor Mike Huckabee appointed her to complete a term. The first female elected Supreme Court justice was Annabelle Imber Tuck, who served from 1998 until she retired at the end of 2009.

Foreign Language Interpreters Meet in Springdale



At their February meeting in Springdale, Director of Court Interpreter Services, Mara Simmons, led a roundtable discussion with certified court interpreters. Among topics discussed were dealing with ethical and other issues that arise in the courts.



AOC Certified Court Interpreters Anne Yancey, Melissa Laelan, Cheryl Thomas, and the Director of Court Interpreter Services, Mara Simmons, presented an informational session to members of the Northwest Arkansas Marshallese community who were interested in becoming court interpreters for the State of Arkansas. Afterward, several individuals expressed their intention to pursue certification in the Marshallese language.

Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator holds Special Supreme Court Meeting

The Arkansas Supreme Court Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator held a special program for circuit judges, prosecuting attorneys, and public defenders on March 14, in Little Rock. The program, entitled “United States Supreme Court Decisions Affecting Sentencing and Post-conviction Procedure,” featured speakers from the Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator and Assistant Attorney General Christian Harris.

Among the topics discussed were decisions of the United States Supreme Court redefining appropriate sentencing for juveniles and the role of federal courts in assessing allegations in post-conviction proceedings of ineffective assistance of trial counsel. The goal of the program was to bring a greater understanding of the decisions that have brought significant changes to criminal law and procedure and that will continue to have a profound effect in those areas as precedent is developed. The program will be repeated at the Spring Judicial College/Judicial Council meeting in June.

Does your courthouse have a ghostly history? Ever hear strange noises or witness unexplainable events? If your courthouse is haunted, we want to hear from you!

We want your strange and interesting stories, experiences, and photos for the October issue. Please send your submissions to meghan.sever@arkansas.gov.

Meet Pollyanna Leimberg



Pol·ly·an·na *noun* \pə-lē-a-nə\ : someone who thinks good things will always happen and finds something good in everything.

Pollyanna “Polly” Leimberg thinks that definition suits her personality; and her experiences in life have provided countless opportunities to either find the good or to wallow in the negative. She chooses to make the best of life’s challenges and adventures.

If you know Polly, you may know one of the hardest-working people in the Fourteenth Judicial District in Harrison. Marty Sullivan, Judicial Branch Education Director, said that in his experience, when Polly takes on a task, she learns everything she can about the subject and prepares well beyond what is required to get the job done. There are no shortcuts in Polly’s work.

She grew up a farm kid in north-central Arkansas, rising early to finish chores before school; then doing more when she got home. “I come from a large family and had lots of cousins who lived nearby,” Polly said. They grew up playing outside, swimming in the creek and catching lightning bugs. “Being the eldest of six siblings, there was not a lot of money...I put myself through college on an athletic scholarship and grants.”

Her life in the courts began in 1986 when she worked for the prosecuting attorney’s office in Mountain Home. She did everything from managing budgets to coordinating cases, and, well, being the “do what’s gotta get done girl.” She is now a Certified Court Manager for Circuit Judge Gordon Webb, who runs two drug courts and handles domestic relations, civil, and criminal divisions in four counties. She is an instructor in Arkansas and six other consortium states for the Institute for Court Management since becoming certified by the National Center for State Courts.

Polly said she has “seen the court system go from electric typewriters and hot check records on index cards to vast computer programs on huge servers.” She worked with law enforcement and the courts to develop a video arraignment system after seeing five or six inmates being brought to court each day increase to 25 or more, which was a security “nightmare.”

“My life is a story written by me holding the pen, not someone else,” Polly said, but in addition to achieving the goals she created, life has provided plenty of opportunities to test her plans and her ability to remain positive.

After moving “to town” with her new husband, SSG Mark F. Leimberg, Polly thought she would be a traditional mother and housewife while her husband did the “outdoor manly-man things” with their son, Steven. As a military family, they had the necessary “what if” conversations. Mark asked for her promise to raise Steven in the Boy Scouts. “He had enjoyed scouting as a young man and wanted our son to have the same positive experience.” Unfortunately, Polly’s promise to her husband came due in 1997 when the Persian Gulf combat veteran died. “It was shortly after my husband’s passing that my son and I joined,” Polly remembered. “So there I was, a widow with a little boy in a little orange tiger T-shirt. Let me tell ya, I may have played outside a lot on the farm, but I was lost as a goose in the ‘scouting world.’”

As is her way, she “pulled herself up by the bootstraps” and began to learn about scouting. “I had made a promise and planned to keep it. Through hard work and a lot of learning, I worked my way through each level of training and attended Wood Badge in 2000.”

“Steven became an Eagle Scout in 2005. My promise to my late husband became a passion and my scouting career continues on today,” Polly said. “In 2012, I was selected to be the 2013 Westark Area Council Wood Badge Scoutmaster for Troop 1. There is a quote Polly likes: “What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.” Indeed, those are words to live by.

New Faces in the Judiciary

AOC

Beth Jacks - CIS Division Executive Assistant
Shadrick Wynn - Computer Support Analyst

District Court Clerks

Cleveland Co./Rison Dept. - **Renee Herring**
Columbia Co./Magnolia Dept. - **Rachel Waller**
Crawford Co./Van Buren Dept. - **Phyllis Thomas**
Pulaski Co./Maumelle Dept. - **Song Fox**
Yell Co./Dardanelle Dept. - **Tammy Meimerstorf**

Official Court Reporters

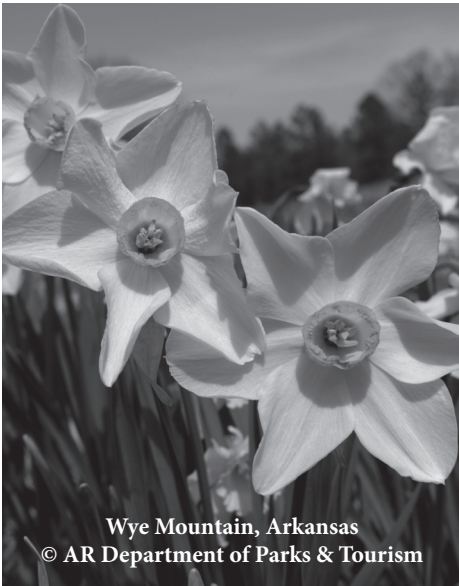
2nd Cir. (Halsey) - **Carol Cook**

Going Digital

The *Friends of the Court* newsletter will move to an online-only format this summer. This will allow room for regular content, more diverse court-related news, and more features on *you*, the people who do the work of the Judicial Branch.

The electronic version of the newsletter is published on the Judiciary website:

www.courts.arkansas.gov/forms-and-publications/newsletters/friends-court



Wye Mountain, Arkansas

© AR Department of Parks & Tourism

Friends of the Court is a bi-monthly publication by the Arkansas Administrative Office of the Courts. Contributions, comments, and inquiries are welcome. Please submit to Friends of the Court, A.O.C., Justice Building, 625 Marshall, Little Rock, AR 72201. Tel. (501) 682-9400. Meghan Sever, Editor. meghan.sever@arkansas.gov

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April

Annual State Drug Court Conference (Springdale) **9-10**

Court Interpreter Candidate Assessment Exam (Springdale) **12**

Southwest Regional CME Program (Arkadelphia) **17**

ADR Commission Meeting (Little Rock) **24**

District Judges Spring College District Court Clerk Annual Meeting (Rogers) **24-25**

May

Children in the Courts (Little Rock) **14-16**

Northeast Regional CME Program **15**

Candidate Assessment Exam (Little Rock) **17**

June

CMP Class '16 "CourTools" (Little Rock) **4-6**

Spring Judicial College/ Judicial Council Meeting (Hot Springs) **11-13**

Candidate Assessment Exam (Springdale) **14**

CMP Class '15 "Purposes and Responsibilities of Courts" (Little Rock) **18-20**

CMP Class '14 "Managing Human Resources" (Little Rock) **25-27**



Friends of the Court
625 Marshall
Little Rock, AR 72201