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2019-2020

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IN BRIEF

FEDERAL JUDICIAL ASSISTANTS ASSOCIATION

Letter from the President

Judith Stoyko

Dear FJAA Members:

COVID-19 certainly has changed our world! I personally have been teleworking since mid March (going into chambers only on Fridays), and I haven't seen most of my co-workers for over six months. The Northern District of California has three main courthouses in Oakland, San Jose, and San Francisco; all remain closed to non-essential personnel. Still, the court's work continues! In September we welcomed our new term law clerk remotely, along with four externs. I haven't met our externs in person for three terms now! We use Zoom to keep in touch on work-related matters – and sometimes just to chat. I'm sure many of you are in similar circumstances.

As you know by now, our September 2021 conference will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana. I had the privilege of visiting NOLA in early January 2020 to vet four hotels in order to make a recommendation to the FJAA board on which will be the site of our annual meeting. I believe you will be pleased with the selection! The hotel will be revealed when registration opens in mid 2021. NOLA is a wonderful city with lots to see and do!

As you are also aware, this year's FJAA conference was scheduled for Tucson, Arizona, but we cancelled it because of COVID-related travel and meeting restrictions. However, you'll be happy to know that we rescheduled Tucson for September 2022, so you can look forward to having a conference in that beautiful city in less than two years!

The FJAA will begin its new fiscal year on November 1, 2020. Most officers and circuit representatives will stay in place for an additional year. One exception is that Barbara Alcon from the Middle District of Louisiana in Baton Rouge will represent the Fifth Circuit, replacing Christine Abadie. I thank Christine for her enthusiastic service, and I welcome Barbara to the 2020-2021 team! **Please note that we need new representatives for the Eleventh and the Federal/D.C. Circuits.** Let me know if you'd like to volunteer – *don't be shy!* – or if you'd like to recommend one of your colleagues.

In just a couple of months, 2020 will come to a close. *Thank goodness!* I wish you the happiest of holidays, and I hope you continue to stay safe and well while enjoying the festivities of the season.

Judy Stoyko, FJAA President

FIRST CIRCUIT— CHRISTIE PICHE

Submitted by Christie Piche

The District of Maine

In early March, the District of Maine was gearing up to work remotely and discussing how the Covid-19 pandemic would likely affect our personal and work lives. At a work team meeting on Friday, March 13, we realized that this would probably happen very soon. In Portland, we learned that a staffer had unknowingly been exposed to one of Maine's first Covid-19-positive patients a week earlier. So the District's pandemic plan was implemented, and on March 16 both courthouses were closed and we began working remotely. IT staff distributed laptops to those who didn't have them and provided training, and very quickly we were all working remotely.

Over these past months, our judges and court administrators have been working to develop and implement procedures to keep our docket moving via telephone and Zoom video conferences and hearings. Beginning October 5, there will be a 10-week session of in-court proceedings. With sanitation and social distancing protocols in place, most judges and chambers staff have resumed in-courthouse work with varying schedules. The Clerk's Office staff continues to work primarily remotely, but some case managers have in-courthouse schedules depending on which judge is holding a hearing.

As a diversion from work, and a way to acknowledge our co-workers' interests and talents, this spring Chief Judge Levy promoted a "Made by Hand" Exhibition for District staffers, including the Bankruptcy Court and Probation and Pretrial Services. Folks were asked to complete a hand-made project: art, craft, woodworking, quilting, sewing, knitting, baking, etc. Participants submitted a photograph of their creation, along with a written description and an explanation of what role creativity plays in their life. All submissions were posted on the Court intranet site.

The panel of judges were District Judge Nancy Torresen, Bankruptcy Judge Peter Cary, and Chief U.S. Probation Officer Kim Rieger. When the judges announced the winners, they included this statement: "We marveled at the creativity and hidden talents of our Court family. From the beauty of the quilts, to the practicality of the landscaping entries, to the heartwarming stories many of you shared, we realized it would be impossible to give a single award given the diversity of the submissions. So, we crafted eight categories of awards for this exhibition."

FIRST CIRCUIT, CONT.

“Made by Hand” Exhibition Winners

Outstanding Technical Skill—awarded to the person who demonstrated exceptional technical skill or craftsmanship

Eric Storms – for his stone bench

Most Original Idea—awarded to the person who demonstrated the most unique idea

Candace Collins – for her sea glass

pictures

Best Display of Heart—awarded to the person who best used their art to express feeling

Chris Dodd – for the hand-carved shell that he gave to his sister

Best Presentation—awarded to the person whose presentation of their submission enhanced their artwork

Ashley Hadam – for her quilt hanging on the clothes line

Best Functional Piece of Art—awarded to the person who best combined art, design, and function

David Parker – for his garden beds

Best Reflects the Spirit of Maine—awarded to the person whose art best captures the essence of Maine.

Amy Collier – for her painting of the Portland Head Light

Most Creative Use of Materials—awarded to the person whose use of materials was most creative

Mark Veilleux – for his collection of song cards

Best in Show

Stacy Graf – for her collection of paintings

We are fortunate in Maine that our Covid-19 positive numbers and deaths are low compared to most other states. We wish everyone well as they get back into their courthouses and into the flow of our regular workload again.



SECOND CIRCUIT— SAMANTHA GENCARELLO



So much has happened in our world and our courts since our last newsletter submission. The last time I submitted I listed a bunch of songs to sing while washing your hands for 20 seconds – how silly that seems now! I truly hope everyone is safe and well.

Court of Appeals

Judge Debra Livingston became Chief of the Second Circuit on September 1, 2020. Our FJAA member, Jeanette Santos, is now assistant to the new Chief.

Two Court of Appeals JA's retired recently. Aneita Delgado served the federal government for 28 years, originally as Judge Newman's judicial assistant and then Judge Walker's. She retired on September 30. Susan Devine became Judge Walker's assistant. Susan has over 20 years of paralegal experience in Connecticut law firms, most recently at Gesmonde, Pietrosimone & Ggrignari, LLC. Susan earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from Southern Connecticut State University and a Paralegal Certification at Albertus Magnus College. Susan grew up in Hamden and am currently lives in Cheshire with her husband. She has three children in their early to late 20's. Her work as a paralegal was with a primary focus of Estate Planning and Estate Settlement. Welcome Susan to the Court and to the FJAA!

Sherilyn Mul retired on August 28 after serving as Judge Calabresi's judicial assistant. Natalie Stock has replaced her. Natalie comes from the private sector; she spent the last 26 years working in a private law firm with a primary focus in labor and union contract negotiations. She lives in North Haven with her husband Chris and they have three children, Andrew (24), Abbey (22), and Joe (19). She looks forward to this new and exciting chapter in her life. Welcome Natalie to the Court and to the FJAA!

Southern District of New York

The Southern District of New York became the first to hold a jury trial in any courthouse, state or federal, in New York City and its suburbs since mid-March. The trial was in front of Judge P. Kevin Castel. So many things had to go into the planning of resuming jury trials, and the first criminal jury trial since the pandemic hit will be underway in mid-October. While the Southern District never closed their doors for good, the majority of the courthouse has been working from home, with judges holding proceedings via telephone conference and Zoom. The resumption of jury trials is one of the biggest hurdles in the pandemic, and an entire team has been tasked with making sure they are as safe as possible.

THIRD CIRCUIT— IRIS LIRIANO

Much has changed since the pandemic struck the world in 2020. March 17th was our last day in the office. The Courts and surrounding federal agencies decided to close which allowed employees to work remotely. The day before we closed, I decided to set up my home computer. This was the first time I've ever experienced working from home and I was filled with anxiety on top of the pandemic. Days, weeks, and months have gone by and we are still working remotely.



It's surprising to see that the Courts have been functioning remotely. The District Court for the District of New Jersey has been performing Zoom proceedings if the defendant consents to it. Otherwise, the Judge and her staff and all the parties involved conduct an in-person court appearance. While this is not ideal due to the high risk of infection to all appearing, if the defendant does not consent to a Zoom proceeding, the Court conducts an in-person one. Currently, the District Court for the District of New Jersey has designated two courtrooms to be used for in-person court proceedings. These courtrooms are especially designed to conform with the safety protocols such as plexiglass barriers for the Judge, her courtroom deputy and the defendant and counsel. No public people are allowed in the courtroom audience section. As for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, the Circuit Judges conduct oral arguments via audio conference.

The Courts are slowly moving to transition to different stages but at this point, there is a large percentage of employees working remotely. For our Chambers, we are only allowing 4 people to work in the office on any given day. Since early July, I have been working in Chambers once a week; preferably on Mondays. Everyone has a hand sanitizer on their desk and a pack of disinfectant wipes. Everyone who steps away from their desk has to mask up. If you are sitting in your office, you can bring your mask down. Since I sit in the reception area, I open my window to let the air circulate in the office. I tend to keep my mask on all day but at times will bring it down when no one is near my area. Interns are only allowed to work remotely.

On a personal note, during the early months of the pandemic and like many others, I took up baking. Baking was comforting and eased my anxiety. Baking was so popular that flour and yeast products were difficult to find. While we sheltered in place, I managed to bake many delicious treats from scratch such as an apple pie, banana chocolate chip muffins, blueberry muffins, chocolate chip cookies, corn muffins, and thumbprint cookies. In addition to baking, I worked on some home projects by painting and decluttering. We are unsure when we'll be back to some normalcy but until then, I hope everyone stays safe and healthy and finds a purpose that's fulfilling.

Iris

FOURTH CIRCUIT— LENA TAPSCOTT

The Upside!!!!

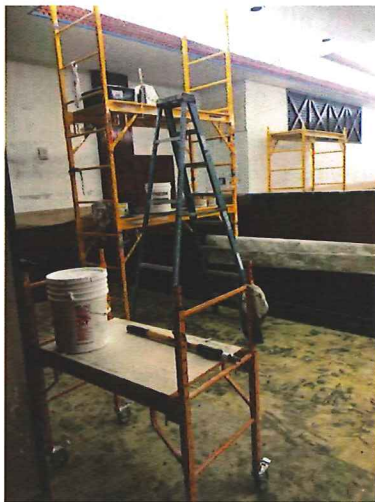
Hello to all of you fabulous Judicial Assistants and Court Staff who continue to push through and serve during these difficult times. We hope all of you are doing well.

Who would have thought we would be living this “temporary” life style for this long??? For the most part our Charleston Division started working remotely on March 15th. While grateful that we were still able to perform our duties, attend to our dockets, hold telephone conferences as needed in both criminal and civil matters, and even hold video sentencings and pleas — it has taken some getting used to. I personally felt, and on more than a few occasions, that I spent so much time spinning wheels and trying to navigate. From biweekly telephone conferences with our District Judges . . . to biweekly conferences with our Chambers Staff . . . to conference calls between our Judges and infectious disease experts . . . to COVID Task Force Meetings with department heads . . . to mock courtroom setups (with face mask and plexiglass barriers of course) . . . to now being able to hold more in-person hearings---- not without obstacles but we continue to navigate our way, adjust, and serve.

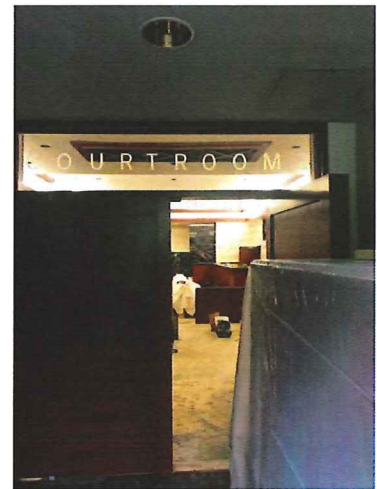
As we continue to increase the number of staff that comes into the Courthouse we continue to keep the faith, think safety first, and remain vigilant in our efforts to flatten that curve!!!!

Courtroom Renovations

Our Courthouse and courtrooms have received a face lift in the last few months. Lighting, carpeting, and painting are just a few of the renovations that have brightened up our beautiful building:

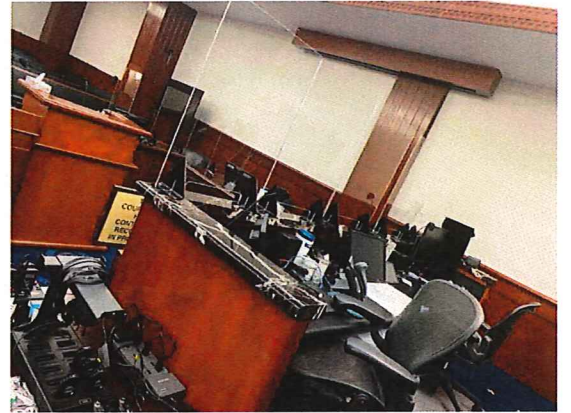


During Construction



FOURTH CIRCUIT, CONT.

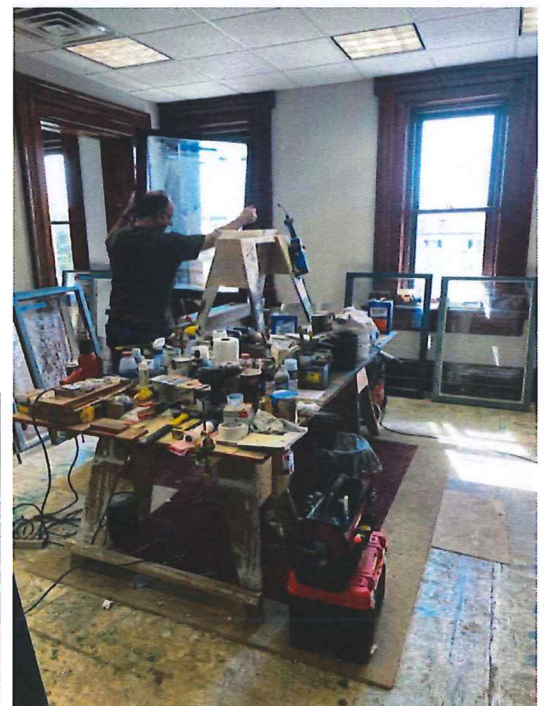
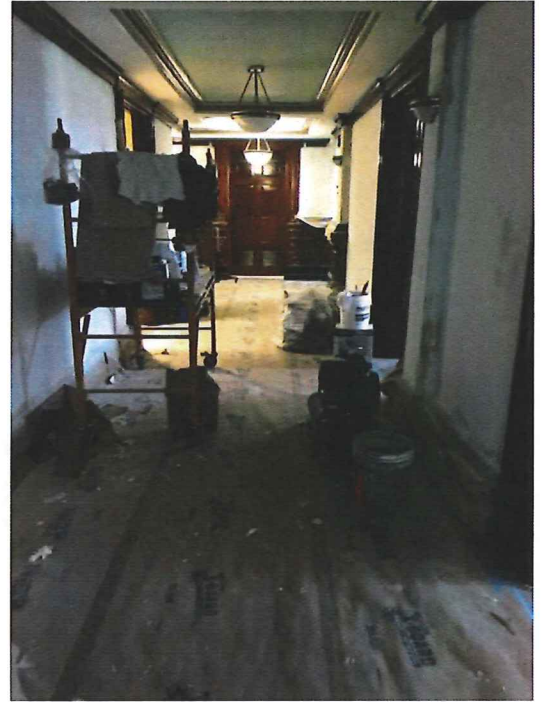
After Construction



FOURTH CIRCUIT, CONT.

Chambers Renovations

We are happy to announce that the renovation of our new Chambers is well underway as well. The contractors assure me that they will be complete after Thanksgiving . . . and we are keeping our fingers crossed!!!!



FOURTH CIRCUIT, CONT.

FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW

THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA—CHARLOTTE, NC

The Charlotte Federal Courthouse is getting a facelift from the 100+ years old Post Office/ Courthouse with an added connecting at the back of the Courthouse. The old Post Office/ Courthouse entrance has had the ceilings refreshed and back to the 1915 look. There had been 9 layers of white paint covering the gold leaf and beautiful historic colors. There are four North Carolina Seals that were in gold leaf and been painted over with white paint. See below the pictures of the beautiful ceiling in the entry way of the courthouse.



We are now working on the new Annex and there is talk of a gold vein under the parking lot where new Annex is being built. Judge Cogburn and Chief Judge Whitney were panning for gold as the Annex was starting out to be built. We work hard at the Western District of North Carolina but we also have fun and enjoy our jobs. No gold left! See the attached picture.



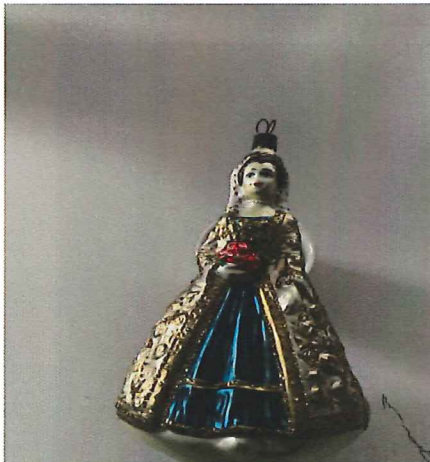
1LT William Ewen Shipp was an officer from Charlotte who was killed in the Spanish- American War. The monument remains one of the few monuments to heroes of that war in the Charlotte area. The monument was on

FOURTH CIRCUIT, CONT.

the courthouse grounds at the corner of Mint and Fourth Streets. At the beginning of construction of the annex the monument was moved to the front of the Charles R. Jonas Federal Building. See the attached picture of the monument being moved to its new home.



At Christmas the Mecklenburg County Historical Society will put up a beautiful Christmas tree with handblown and hand decorated glass ornaments based upon the life size sculpture of “Queen Charlotte Walks in Her Garden” by noted sculptor Graham Weathers. See The Annex is on the way to completion. Move in date is April 21, 2021. More news and pictures to follow.



Ruth Lee Blackmon, Paralegal/Judicial Assistant to
The Honorable Frank D. Whitney

Western District of North Carolina—Charlotte, NC

FOURTH CIRCUIT, CONT.

Courthouse Life in a Time of COVID

We've all endured unprecedented stresses throughout this pandemic. Between learning new technologies in order to work from home (like this old gal!) to figuring out new ways and workarounds to accomplish something that was once so easy and mindless (like scheduling hearings), it's been quite the learning curve. I must say I've learned quite a bit technologically speaking, but I've also been reminded of something that I've always known, and that our court family is just that - family! We've relied on each other in new ways and have come together to make sure we all are supported. As we slowly trickle back into work, we are excited when everyone in our chambers is back together on the same day. Nine months ago, that would have seemed so silly! We find how much we missed the everyday things that we took for granted - the chats with court security officers, seeing co-workers from other agencies and departments, birthday cupcakes in the breakroom - and we realize that while we've been apart physically, we are still connected like a family. It's a comfort that, in the uncertain time we find ourselves in, we can pick up with our court family right where we left off.

Lisa Richburg, Judicial Assistant for

The Honorable David C. Norton

Charleston, SC

Have you heard about **AbilityOne**?

I was excited to learn about this wonderful program, which is supported by our employer, the Federal Government! Included with a supply order I received was a catalog, and just inside the cover was a letter from the U.S. AbilityOne Commission outlining their program, the single largest employer of people who are blind or disabled. The Commission works through a network of nonprofit agencies.

I don't know about you, but programs like this always touch my heartstrings and make me want to support them in any way possible. As a single person one-income household, that does not always translate into financial donations, but I do my best to support the efforts of any organization trying to make the world better for those challenged by disability or otherwise at a disadvantage. So I wanted to bring it to the attention of my fellow employees in the federal system.

Many of the products we purchase for our offices support this program, so if you have to order supplies anyway, look for the ones that partner with AbilityOne. Many of our trusted major suppliers are on board. It only takes a minute or two to determine if there is a product you will love from a company which gives back.

Here are a few links to find out more:

AbilityOne History and Program Information

<https://www.abilityone.gov/commission/mission>

<https://www.abilityone.com/home>

https://abilityone.gov/procurement_list/product_contractors

https://www.abilityone.gov/abilityone_program/faqs

I hope you find this both helpful and encouraging. I sure did!

Deb Reynolds, Judicial Assistant to

The Honorable A. Marvin Quattlebaum, Jr.

Greenville, SC

FIFTH CIRCUIT – CHRISTINE ABADIE

Fifth Circuit News

2020 Employment Anniversaries:

JANUARY:

33 Yrs – Penny Stautberg
17 Yrs – Hope Taomina
2 Yrs – Terri Flowers
1 Yr – Kelly Brossett

FEBRUARY:

18 Yrs – Pamela Angelette
1 Yr – Belinda Saenz

MARCH:

32 Yrs – Flay Sambrone-Metoyer
18 Yrs – Eva Gonzales
13 Yrs – Luz Probus
2 Yrs – Cindy Odom

APRIL:

6 Yrs – Dianna Davis

MAY:

26 Yrs – Marilyn Myers
25 Yrs – Donna Wisecarver
7 Yrs – Barbara Alcon
2 Yrs – Karen McClelland

JUNE:

25 Yrs – Terri Scott
15 Yrs – Michele Johnson
2 Yrs – Cherie Arthur

JULY:

18 Yrs – Adalia Mora
9 Yrs – Nereida Perez
6 Yrs – Phyllis Simmons
2 Yrs – Becky Greenup
2 Yrs – Lauren Webster
1 Yr – Syliva Fontenot
1 Yr – Wendy McCrossen

AUGUST:

19 Yrs – Gina Rogers
15 Yrs – Pam Wood
4 Yrs – Lisa Wallace

SEPTEMBER:

24 Yrs – Dwendy Pennell
20 Yrs – Jenny Rudolph
17 Yrs – Sandra Flores
16 Yrs – Jamie Tullier
5 Yrs – Karen Ballard

OCTOBER:

22 Yrs – Hope McDonald
3 Yrs – Christine Abadie
2 Yrs – Adria Wallace
2 Yrs – Barbara Ewing

NOVEMBER:

19 Yrs – Lisa Martin
11 Yrs – Brandy Route
11 Yrs – Paige Lessor
9 Yrs – Sharon Johnson
2 Yrs – Gretchen Heldner

DECEMBER:

7 Yrs – Toni Leard
3 Yrs – Tonia Carruth
2 Yrs – Desiree Sillas

**WELCOME TO THE
FIFTH CIRCUIT;
WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE
HERE!**



Christine Abadie, Circuit Representative

U.S. FIFTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS

- JUDGE CORY T. WILSON – MARY DOOLEY, JA

U.S. DISTRICT JUDGES:

- JUDGE DREW B. TIPTON, SDTX

- JUDGE DAVID C. JOSEPH, WDLA – MONA HARDWICK, JA

U.S. MAGISTRATE JUDGES:

- Judge Julie K. Hampton, SDTX – Michelle Holliday, JA

RETIREMENT NEWS!

Susan Barrios, JA to Judge Clement, Circuit Judge

-- 46 Years of Service – Welcome “New/Old” JA, Luz Probus

Linda Dupre, JA to Judge Summerhays, WDLA

-- 29 Years of Service – Welcome New JA, Tonya Griffith