

Rooker Report

October 16, 1995

Published by the Davidson County Circuit Court Clerk's Office

Vol.3, No. 9

IN MEMORIAM



PROBATE JUDGE JIM EVERETT
1943-1995

AFTER 35 YEARS, BUREAU'S 'GRANNY' HARRIS STILL GOING STRONG

When Elizabeth Harris came to work for the Traffic Violations Bureau, the police chief was Frank Muller, Ben West was mayor and Beverly Briley was county judge.

The year was 1960.

It would be three more years before Nashville and Davidson County would be merged into a metropolitan form of government and yet a few more years before the city's streets would become venues for fighting between the races.

The typewriter was state-of-the-art technology and writer's cramps bore the brunt of occupational complaints.

The traffic bureau was managed by the police department and a person could be tossed into jail for not paying a speeding fine.

Yes, things were different then. And Mrs. Harris has weathered the evolution.

Little did she know on Oct. 2, 1960 that she would be cutting the first wedge from an anniversary cake bearing her name 35 years later. But there she was, doing just that to rousing applause from an admiring roomful of co-workers -- many of whom weren't even born when she first sat down at a desk in the bureau.

Mrs. Harris, affectionately known as "Granny" to fellow employees, was a mere child of 43 at the time of her civil service debut. It would not be appropriate to say it was her first "job," because she was no stranger to work, having been married to an attorney and raising a son to follow in his dad's footsteps.

The years ahead would bear both gratification and grief. She would enjoy the occupational challenge, but she would be forced to complete her career

without her husband and her only son, both fatal victims of heart attacks.

Her husband, attorney John I. Harris, Sr., would share only the first four years of her working life and son, John I. Harris, Jr., would suffer the same fate 12 years later. Today, three grandsons -- each successful in his own right -- fill her emotional void.

Mrs. Harris has no problem in recalling her first duties in the bureau. She remembers that the bookkeeping system was a slow and tedious process. "I was assigned to the master control books at first," she remembers. "That meant that I had to post the number of tickets, and list the violations and court dates -- taking the information from a daily accounting sheet."

When she says "post," she means by hand, not via computer entry.

Later, she became married to a typewriter and did her posting on arrest cards, which actually were police records of those who refused to pay their traffic fines.

To this day, Mrs. Harris continues to perform typing duties, one of only a few circuit clerk employees still utilizing the typewriter as basic equipment in their jobs.

Her 35 years on the job have been marked by near-flawless attendance, punctuality and steady production, punctuated by a seemingly endless presence of high energy. Those were the traits that drew praise from Circuit Court Clerk Richard Rooker during the anniversary breakfast party at the bureau.

Toss in a few more adjectives like spunky, wiry and gentle and you have a pretty accurate picture of a rare lady who seemingly could go another 35 years before asking if she qualified for retirement.

She never takes anything for granted.

IRS Garnishment Agent Changes; Postage Fee Increased for Process

The treasury department has announced a change in mail routing for garnishment executions against Internal Revenue Service employees.

The new processing agent for such claims filed after last Sept. 18, is:

*Chief, Special Processing Unit
Garnishment Processing Center
214 North Kanawha Street
Beckley, WV 25801*

Previously, withholding orders against IRS employees for family support, commercial debts and Chapter 13 bankruptcy proceedings were reviewed and implemented by the department's chief counsel office in Washington, D.C.

Another change involving federal employee garnishments is the amount of advance postage pay-

ment required for filing of process. The recent increase in postal rates has increased the payment from \$8.19 to \$9.02.

The change in agents for claims against IRS employees is not applicable to employees of the U.S. Postal Service or the Department of Defense. The routing instructions for those two departments are still:

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Manager,

Payroll Processing Branch

1 Federal Drive

Snelling, MN 55111-9650

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Defense Finance and Accounting Service Center,

Office of General Counsel,

Code L, P.O. Box 998002

Cleveland, OH 44199-8002.

Guardianship Release Age is Still 18

An earlier report that the state legislature had revised age guidelines for minor heirs in probate cases was based on incorrect information.

We erroneously stated that guardianship over such probate cases could be extended until a minor heir reaches the age of 21 unless proof were shown that the heir was mature enough at 18 years of age to appreciate financial responsibility. Legislation proposing that change passed the Senate but failed to clear the House. It will be reintroduced in the next General Assembly.

The current statute requires the termination of guardianship upon a minor heir's 18th birthday. No proof of financial responsibility is required.

General Sessions Committees

Presiding Judge Penny Harrington has revised the makeup of the 10 committees that oversee various business functions of the General Sessions Courts.

This is the third year for the committee concept, initiated by Judge Mike Mondelli during his reign as presiding judge of the nine-member court.

Following is a complete listing of this year's committees, their members and chairperson of each one, effective through August, 1996:

Traffic Court

*Mike Mondelli
Gale Robinson
Casey Moreland

Criminal Court

*Gale Robinson
William Faimon
Casey Moreland
Penny Harrington

Civil Court

*Leon Ruben
Casey Moreland
Mike Mondelli
William Higgins

Commissioners

*William Faimon
Gale Robinson
Phil Sadler

Probation/Pretrial Release

*William Faimon
Penny Harrington
Mike Mondelli

*Committee Chair

Bar Liaison

*William Faimon
Phil Sadler
William Higgins

Courtroom Space Planning

*John Brown
Leon Ruben
Casey Moreland
Phil Sadler

Legislative/Executive

*Casey Moreland
Leon Ruben
John Brown
Phil Sadler

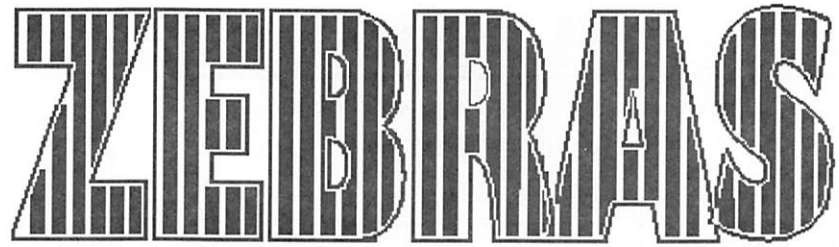
Administration/Personnel/Budget

*John Brown
Mike Mondelli
Leon Ruben

Domestic Violence

*Gale Robinson
Penny Harrington
William Faimon

With 40 Years Under His Belt, Warrant Officer Ray Fuller is Dean of the...



Don't let Ray Fuller see you foul up; he'll blow the whistle on you. That's what high school coaches in Middle Tennessee have been telling their charges for the past four decades when the familiar official takes the field to enforce the rules.

Whether it be football, basketball or one of those diamond games, chances are good that Fuller will be there calling the shots. He's been doing it longer than anyone else around these parts.

At the age of 71, Fuller is the oldest active official among the hundreds who serve the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association. And with the current football season in full swing, the dean of officials has donned the zebra stripes for the 40th consecutive year, a milestone commemorated by a handsome plaque that graces his desk in the Traffic Violations Bureau warrant office.

It is there that Fuller shares Monday morning rehashes with fellow officials Don Clunan and Will Cripps, two coworkers who also devote their Friday evenings to the gridiron grind.

Clunan is heir apparent to Fuller's longevity throne. His officiating odometer is about to roll over on year number 38 and he shares credit with Fuller for encouraging Cripps to join the officiating ranks six years ago.

The three warrant officers have the full support of their boss, Circuit Court Clerk Richard Rooker, who has been a fulltime football official himself for 13 years.

Today's officials get paid a flat rate of \$60 per game, a great improvement over the pay structure in 1955 when Fuller made his debut as a referee. Then, he said, the most you could make was \$35 a game and the size of your check depended on the size of the crowd who paid to see the games. "You could always count on getting a minimum of \$12.50," he recalled, "but anything over that was based on a sliding scale according to the number of paying fans."

Of course, income is not the primary consideration for becoming an official. There are a host of other reasons, not the least of which is the desire to maintain a link with school athletics in which they have enjoyed personal gratification.

For Fuller, a 1943 graduate of Hume-Fogg High School, that magnetism drew him more to basketball and baseball than to football. He was a standout baseball player and spent one year at third base for the Clarksville Owls in the old Kitty League.

"I often wonder if I could have made the majors," he laments, noting that his pro ball days ended after he got married and could not get a leave of

absence from his job. He would later fulfill his desire for competition by playing semi-pro basketball on an independent team whose roster included a player by the name of George Rooker.

Fuller and Rooker became friends both on and off the court. Years later, when Rooker, now deceased, was into his third term as circuit court clerk, Fuller was hired as a warrant officer and the two men continued to run the hardwood -- as officials, rather than as players.

Clunan was content with playing basketball and football at Father Ryan, but decided to become an official in 1958 with encouragement from subsequent Ryan coach, Louis Catignani. He exploited his talents on both the hardwood and gridiron for a number of years before finally settling into football exclusively. "I just got tired of basketball," he said.

Richard Rooker and Cripps, both outstanding athletes at Goodpasture High School, limit their officiating to football.

Weekly meetings keep the officials up to date on rule changes and other regulations pertinent to their jobs. But there are no classes on how to deal with stress brought on by unruly fans.

Fuller remembers all too well an incident that took place in the early 70s when he was calling a baseball game between Vanderbilt and a team out of Memphis.

The Memphis team's manager became upset when Fuller called a third strike on one of his batters. "He called me a name and I ejected him," Fuller recalled. "He took a swing at me and missed and I popped him in the head with my protective mask. About that time, all of his players converged on me and the manager's son cold-cocked me from my blind side. I was out like a light."

Fuller said he later swore out a warrant for the manager's son, who was fined \$37.50. Then, Fuller sued the boy for \$5,000 in damages and was awarded \$3,750 in a jury trial.

Accidental injury is always a possibility for officials. Once during a basketball game, Fuller was hit from behind by a player. He fell and broke both his wrists, but finished refereeing the half before going to a hospital. Three nights later, he was back on the courts.

Clunan said he had never been physically attacked, but has sustained "plenty of verbal abuse." His philosophy is to "stay cool at all times."

And how do today's players compare with those of the past?

"Players now are bigger and quicker," says Fuller. "Either that or I'm older and slower."

Good call, ref.



\$ DATA BANK

Statistics compiled for the month of September

Case Information

Circuit Court

New Civil Cases Filed 342
 Civil Cases Concluded 298
 New Divorce Cases Filed 286
 Divorce Cases Closed 299

General Sessions Civil

New Cases Filed 2,700
 Executions Issued 2,598
 Judgments Collected \$488,043
 Orders of Protection Petitions 201

Probate Court

New Cases Filed 137
 Cases Closed 89
 Cases Retired 2

Traffic Violations

Moving Citations 18,229
 Parking Violations 8,135
 Total Fines Collected \$284,442
 Nullifications 1,571
 Nullification Fees Collected \$14,139

Circuit Court Jury Trial Verdicts

Case	Week of September 11			Verdict
	Type	Court		
94C-2702	Auto Accident	1st	(P)	\$15,533
95C-284	Auto Accident	5th	(P)	\$11,500
93C-2461	Auto Accident	2nd		Defendant

Case	Week of September 18			Verdict
	Type	Court		
91C-2642	Medical Malpractice	6th		Mistrial
93C-3372	Auto Accident	1st	(P)	\$98,000
93C-229	Slip/Fall	2nd		Defendant
93C-312	Auto Accident	6th		Defendant
93C-2364	Auto Accident	5th	(P)	\$70,000

Reminders

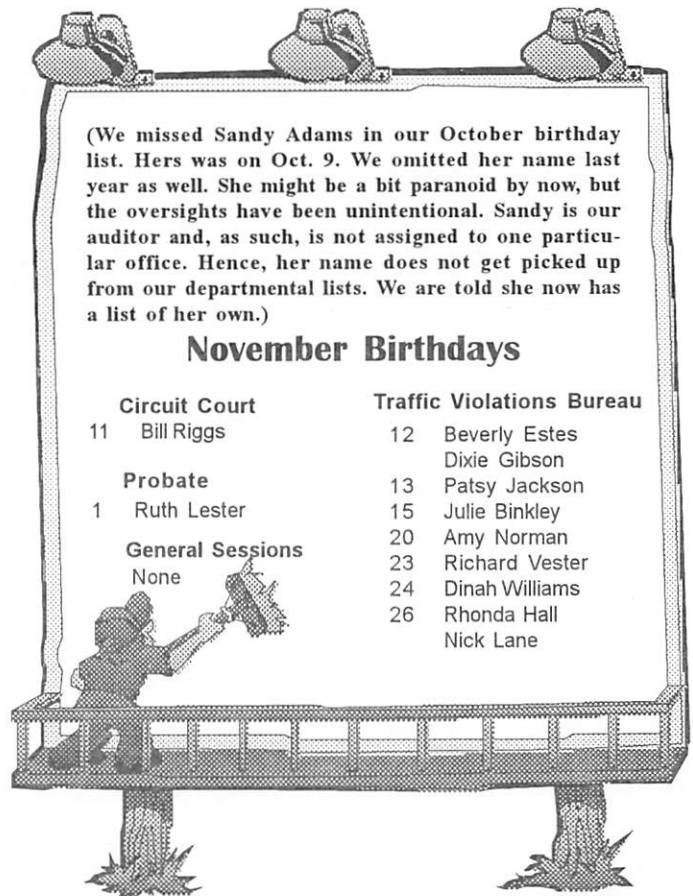
- ◆ Daylight Savings Time ends at 2 a.m. on Sunday, Oct. 29.
- ◆ The Metro Employees Consolidated Charities Campaign is underway. Pledge cards should be completed and submitted this week if possible.
- ◆ The Second Harvest Food Bank drive is Nov. 16. Non-perishable food donations should be delivered to the Metro Courthouse between 9-10 a.m. or to the Stahlman Building between 12-1 p.m. on that day.

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Published by the Davidson County Circuit Court Clerk's Office
 506 Metro Courthouse, Nashville, TN 37201

Established by George L. Rooker (1929-1993),
 (Circuit Court Clerk, 1968-1993)

Richard R. Rooker Circuit Court Clerk
 Gene Baker Editor



(We missed Sandy Adams in our October birthday list. Hers was on Oct. 9. We omitted her name last year as well. She might be a bit paranoid by now, but the oversights have been unintentional. Sandy is our auditor and, as such, is not assigned to one particular office. Hence, her name does not get picked up from our departmental lists. We are told she now has a list of her own.)

November Birthdays

Circuit Court		Traffic Violations Bureau	
11	Bill Riggs	12	Beverly Estes Dixie Gibson
	Probate	13	Patsy Jackson
1	Ruth Lester	15	Julie Binkley
	General Sessions	20	Amy Norman
	None	23	Richard Vester
		24	Dinah Williams
		26	Rhonda Hall Nick Lane

Cheers...

Everyone rise in ovation to the state Supreme Court for taking its show on the road in an effort to "demystify" the legal system. The justices made the first of three on-the-road court stops in Murfreesboro where 100 high school students were treated to judicial protocol by the state's highest tribunal...Steve Rose is back on the job in the Traffic Violations Bureau's warrant office after undergoing corrective surgery on his right shoulder...And Betty Murray is easing back into her chores in our circuit office after surgery to remove an intrusive portion of bone in her right arm. An earlier fracture caused the bone to press against a nerve.

...Tears

The tragic shooting death of sheriff's deputy Jerry Newson Jr., and the wounding of his partner Johnny Spears brought sadness to the entire community and emphasized the dangers of being an agent for the government, regardless of the level of service. While we express our deepest sympathy to officer Newson's family and give thanks for Spear's survival, we pray that the price the deputies paid will lead to improved, safer procedures for others facing similar circumstances. It was fitting that the Metro Police Department honored Newson with the prestigious Medal of Valor. We regret that he never knew of our appreciation for his outstanding job performance in serving process for our General Sessions office.

Our condolences to Traffic Violations Bureau bookkeeper Jean Hart in the Oct. 7 death of her husband Frank Edwin Hart. Mr. Hart, 77, suffered a fatal heart attack while working in the yard with his wife. His sister, Carlene Stoehr, also works in our traffic bureau.

We also are saddened by the recent passing of retired local golf pro Luther Hickman, who represented Nashville in the Professional Golf Association for 46 of his 82 years. Because of his 59-year employment with the Metro Parks and Recreation Department and a long stint as head professional at McCabe Golf Course, he was known as "Mr. Public Golf." He will be missed.