

# Rooker Report

August 19, 1996

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## Here Come the New Judges

### SWEARING-IN CEREMONIES

Cheryl Blackburn	Aug. 22	1 p.m.	State Capitol
Carol McCoy	Sept. 3	10:30 a.m.	Council Chambers
Sue Evans	Sept. 3	10:30 a.m.	Council Chambers



**SUE MCKNIGHT EVANS**  
*General Sessions*



**CHERYL BLACKBURN**  
*Criminal Court*



**CAROL MCCOY**  
*Chancery Court*

## CHIEF JUSTICE BIRCH TO ADMINISTER OATHS

Davidson County's newest members of the judiciary have a lot in common. In addition to being women, they share the same admiration for the state's highest ranking jurist.

All three have selected Chief Justice A. A. Birch of the Tennessee Supreme Court to preside over their swearing-in ceremonies.

Justice Birch will administer the oath first to Cheryl Blackburn, the governor's choice to replace Ann Lacy Johns on the Criminal Court bench. That ceremony will take place at 1 p.m. on Aug. 22 in the old Supreme Court courtroom in the state capitol.

Blackburn can assume official duties at any point after the ceremony, since the judgeship has remained vacant since Johns' retirement on July 31.

The other two judges must wait until Sept. 3 to assume official duties bestowed upon them by county voters. While both terms actually begin on Sept. 1, that date falls on a Sunday and the following day is Labor Day, a national holiday.

For Sue McKnight Evans, opening day on the General Sessions Court bench will begin rather awkwardly. Because her court's first docket is scheduled for 9 a.m., she will be on the bench for the roll call, but won't listen to the actual cases until she has been sworn in at 10:30 a.m.

Litigants will not be severely inconvenienced, however, because the ceremony will be held just across the street in the council chambers of the Metro Courthouse.

Both Evans and new Chancellor Carol McCoy will be sworn in by Justice Birch at that ceremony, which will be followed by a reception for the two elected judges.

All three women are filling vacancies in their respective courts and face election in 1998 when all current judicial terms expire.

Evans, a 62-year-old grandmother, will complete the term of the late Judge Donald Washburn, making it the first time ever that two women have served on the General Sessions Court at the same time. She shares that honor with Penny Harrington, current presiding judge of the nine-division court. Only one other woman, Circuit Court Judge Barbara Haynes, has won election to the General Sessions court.

McCoy, 48, will complete the term of retired Chancellor C. Allen High. But she will be replacing a woman -- Ellen Hobbs Lyle -- who was appointed to the court but was defeated by McCoy in the general election. Lyle has since disclosed plans to seek appointment to the Chancery Court seat being vacated this month by Chancellor Bob Brandt.

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## Judge Bill Higgins to Fete Supporters on Labor Day

Before he became a judge, Bill Higgins served three terms as a member of the Metro Council while maintaining a private law practice. His service to the community established a constituency that would support two successful terms on the general sessions bench.



JUDGE HIGGINS

It will be two years before Higgins faces the voters again. So, many political observers were puzzled when he decided to host a Labor Day picnic next month -- free to all who wish to be there.

"I just want to express my appreciation to working men and women who have supported me for the past 25 years," Higgins says of the family oriented event that will be held at West Nashville's Richland Park.

The four-hour "old-fashioned" get together will start at 1 p.m. with free watermelon, hot dogs and soda pop for everyone. Entertainment will be provided by clowns and singer Tom Grant and his band. Activity-minded guests can take advantage of the park's tennis courts and playground. And children will be invited to enjoy hayrides.

The park is located in front of Cohn High School where Higgins was graduated prior to receiving degrees from Vanderbilt University and the old Nashville YMCA Night Law School.

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## Cory Parkinson on National Diamond Championship Team

Cory Parkinson, son of deputy circuit court clerk Jeff Parkinson, has a national championship to his credit.

And he's only nine years old.

Cory was a member of the Crieve Hall Youth Athletics League team that defeated a strong Mississippi Heat club in the title game of the AAU national baseball championships in Little Rock earlier this month.

With mom and dad rooting from the stands, young Parkinson complemented third base defense with strong hitting power to help the Nashville Cannons to a 7-2 win in the title game.

A total of 28 teams from 15 states competed in the tournament for nine-year-olds.

For their winning effort, the Crieve Hall youngsters each received a trophy, a gold medal, ball cap and tee shirt.

Note to Cory: This might be a good time to negotiate your allowance.

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## Court Officer Sonny Lyons Joining Personnel Department

Granville (Sonny) Lyons has resigned as a court officer for General Sessions Court Judge Leon Ruben to accept a position with the Metro Personnel Department.

Lyons, 44, joined Ruben's staff in 1992. He is scheduled to assume his new position as a human resources analyst sometime in September.

Lyons said the new job offers a greater challenge and better long range security.

Ruben said no replacement has been chosen.

## New Judges Prepare to Take Benches

(From Page 1)

Like McCoy, Blackburn is 48 years old. But where McCoy's professional background has been in private law practice, Blackburn has built her reputation as a prosecutor with the district attorney general's office. It was her record of being "tough on crime" that influenced her selection over others vying for the post.

During her 17-year career with the DA's office, Blackburn sought the death penalty in four cases. She won convictions in all four cases with death sentences being handed down in all but one, which resulted in a life term for the defendant.

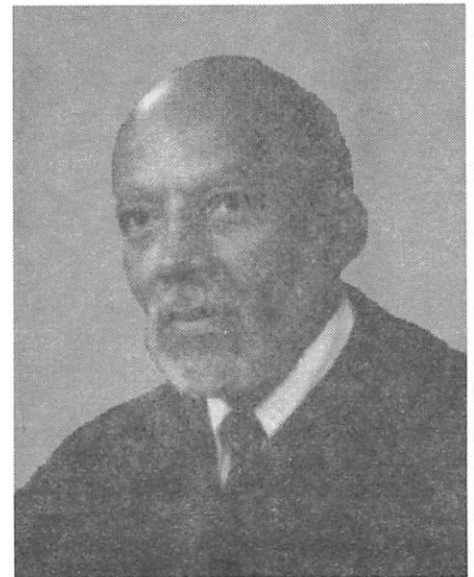
Blackburn is a 1969 graduate of Vanderbilt University and holds a masters degree in clinical psychology. She joined the district attorney's office in 1979 after receiving her law degree from the Nashville School of Law. For the past

seven years she has served as deputy district attorney and is one of only six certified criminal trial specialists in Tennessee.

McCoy, too, is a graduate of Vanderbilt University. After receiving her law degree in 1973, she entered private practice and eventually became a partner in the firm of Davies, Cantrell, Humphreys and McCoy.

Evans has a common bond with Blackburn in that she, too, earned her law degree from the Nashville School of Law. Her pursuit of a legal career came later in life than her two fellow judges. She was 49 years old when she passed the bar and opened a private practice. In recent years, she has gained judicial experience by frequently sitting as a special judge in the court of which she is now a member.

There are now a total of seven women judges in Davidson County, including Muriel Robinson, Barbara Haynes and Marietta Shipley of Circuit Court and Harrington of General Sessions.



CHIEF JUSTICE A.A. BIRCH will swear in new judges

## Holiday Reminder

Government offices will be closed on Monday, Sept. 2 for Labor Day.

Departments under Circuit Court Clerk Richard Rooker will reopen on Tuesday at the normal time. These offices include the Circuit Court Clerk's office, General Sessions Civil Division, Probate Court Clerk and Traffic Violations Bureau.



## BYE, GEORGE

### PRENTICE ACCEPTS IOWA FEDERAL CLERKING POST

George Prentice, who made jury duty an easier pill to swallow for Davidson County citizens, has been named clerk of court for the U. S. Bankruptcy Court in the northern district of Iowa.

Prentice, 35, assumes his new position on Aug. 19, four days after the effective date of his resignation as trial court administrator here.

Prentice will be headquartered in Cedar Rapids with administrative duties in 52 counties under two federal judges. He will have a staff of 21 deputies.

Salary figures were not disclosed, but Prentice called the new assignment "a great opportunity" from both a monetary and career advancement perspective.

His departure comes after two and a half years as coordinator of the Circuit, Criminal and Chancery courts. Within that relatively short period of time, he became an unsung hero to the thousands of citizens who serve on juries.

He reduced their time of service, made it more convenient to qualify, provided call-in assignment accommodations and instituted plans for more pleasant assembly quarters. Not to mention implementation of a computerized juror management program that speeds up registration and keeps a journal of each person's service activity, including a payroll accounting. He also helped introduce case management programs designed to resolve pretrial issues and promote a higher percentage of settlements.

Consider, too, the progress made in improving courtroom facilities. Most every courtroom and judges' quarters have undergone or are currently undergoing renovation under Prentice. In addition to new paint, flooring and furnishings, nine of the 14 courtrooms now have new sound systems, including listening devices for the hearing impaired.

The demolition phase has begun for providing a general assembly room for jurors on the ground floor, to be followed by the reloca-



GEORGE PRENTICE

*As trial court administrator, George Prentice made a lasting impression on the local judiciary, playing a key role in bringing reform to many areas, including jury consolidation and computerized management procedures. This month he assumes a new role as clerk of the U. S. Bankruptcy Court system in northern Iowa.*

tion to the sixth floor of the trial court administrator's office.

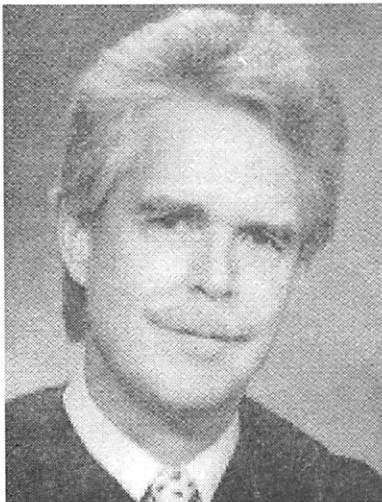
In short, Prentice helped bring the judicial system into the twentieth century, an achievement that will greatly benefit his successor, who is expected to be named this fall. Applications for the post will be received by Circuit Court Judge Tom Brothers, search committee chairman, until Sept. 15.

In announcing his resignation, Prentice praised both judges and administrative personnel for supporting his ideals and efforts toward improving the methods of conducting business in the courts. He especially thanked Criminal Court Judge Thomas H. Shriver and Circuit Court Judge Barbara Haynes -- the two presiding judges during his reign -- for their cooperation and leadership roles.

Prentice was one of more than 100 applicants for the court administrator's post in 1993. His qualifications won out. A graduate of the University of New Orleans, he received a master's degree in justice from American University, specializing in court management. After working in the New Orleans court system for five years, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he served with the U. S. District Court for three years.

Since that time, Prentice has maintained contact with friends he made while working in the federal court system.

Prentice and his wife have three daughters.



JUDGE HAMILTON GAYDEN  
To Preside Over Trial Courts

## GAYDEN NAMED PRESIDING JUDGE

First Circuit Court Judge Hamilton Gayden has been selected to preside over Davidson County's 14 trial courts starting Sept. 1.

Gayden will succeed Third Circuit Court Judge Barbara Haynes, who is completing her one-year term this month.

The presiding judge is primarily responsible for maintaining an equitable distribution of the trial court workload, overseeing budget matters and reducing docket delays.

Although Gayden is a veteran jurist with 18 years on the bench, this will be his first time to serve as presiding judge.

A 1964 graduate of Vanderbilt University, Gayden maintained a private law

practice until 1974 when he was appointed to a General Sessions judgeship. Four years later, he was elected to complete the term of the late Circuit Court Judge J. William Rutherford. He went on to win reelection in 1982 and again in 1990.

Gayden and his wife Paulette have two sons and a daughter.

As presiding judge, Gayden said he planned no drastic changes in the way the courts currently conduct business, but said emphasis would continue to be placed on pretrial settlement conferences and other areas of case management.

The trial courts consist of Circuit, Criminal, Probate and Chancery, each of which provides members of management committees.

## Cheers...

Hats off to the American Bar Association for recognizing the accomplishments of Nashville attorney **Riney Green**. Green was honored at the ABA's annual meeting in Orlando earlier this month for his pro bono services to indigents. The local bar recommended Green for the award because of his free services to the poor and for his commitment to expanding legal services statewide...Former Traffic Violations Bureau computer clerk **Julie Johnson** became a mother for the second time last month, giving birth to daughter **Mary Grace** at St. Thomas Hospital. Hubby **Larry Johnson** said the couple's newest pride and joy tilted the scales at 8 pounds, 1 ounce and measured 19 inches...Meanwhile, general sessions docket clerk **Pat Baxter** has been taking a lot of kidding from fellow workers over a sign that was placed in her yard last month announcing the arrival of a baby. It was either a joke or somebody picked the wrong yard, says Baxter, a grandmother. The latter seems to be the most logical explanation. Who would play a joke on Baxter?...Congrats to the former **Lee Whitley** of the Justice Information System upon her recent marriage. Lee, who is layout and design editor of the JIS newsletter "On Line," became Mrs. **Eric Robinson** in May...**Sharon Nixon** has traded in one keyboard for another. The now-former Traffic Violations Bureau computer room employee has joined the staff of Metro's Pretrial Release program as a data entry clerk...Retired Davidson County Chancellor **C. Allen High** will be given permanent tribute later this month when his portrait is unveiled in the courtroom where he presided for more than two decades. The unveiling is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on Aug. 29.

## ...Tears

The Nashville legal community lost five of its distinguished members since our last report. We extend our deepest sympathy to their families and acknowledge their contributions.

--**Jordan Stokes III**, 90, who was Nashville's oldest practicing attorney, died Aug. 7 at Baptist Hospital from complications following surgery to mend a broken leg. He was a fourth generation lawyer who became Nashville's youngest barrister at the age of 19, passing the state bar exam in 1925.

--**Tyree Harris**, 75, who practiced law for 52 years before his retirement last year, passed away Aug. 6 at his home following a lengthy bout with cancer. He was past president of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers and ranked among the city's most noted barristers.

--**Russell B. Ennix**, 52, died Aug. 5 from complications of a stroke he suffered in January. He was a son of the late **Coyness Ennix**, one of Nashville's pioneering black lawyers who helped found Kent College.

--**Joseph Vaulx Crockett Jr.**, 88, a member of one of the state's oldest law firms (**Rutherford, Crockett and DeMarco**), succumbed to circulatory complications at Centennial Medical Center last month. His law career spanned more than six decades. He was the father of attorney **Joe Crockett III** and two daughters.

--**Cyril Vaughan Frazer Jr.**, a retired Nashville lawyer, died earlier this month of cancer. He formerly served as counselor-at-large to the state attorney general and was active in volunteer work and the church.

## Rooker Report

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

**Richard R. Rooker** ..... Circuit Court Clerk  
**Gene Baker** ..... Editor

### September Birthdays

Traffic Violations Bureau	Circuit Court Clerk
5 Annette Wheeler	1 Danny Lamb
11 Bill Cartwright	18 Diane Tucker
15 Dickey Fuqua	23 Candy Rucker
20 Nancy Capps	29 Betty Thompson
	General Sessions
21 Tony Eden	14 Jim Rusley
22 Elaine Howell	21 Stephanie Phillips
27 Leslie Allumbaugh	
Don Rosso	Probate
28 Elizabeth Harris	5 Anita Riggan
	13 John Clemmons
	18 Bob Bradshaw Jr.
	Ricky Deatherage

## DATA BANK

Statistics compiled for the month of July

### Case Information

#### Circuit Court

New Civil Cases Filed.....	334
Civil Cases Concluded.....	320
New Divorce Cases Filed.....	281
Divorce Cases Concluded.....	313

#### General Sessions Civil

New Cases Filed.....	3,395
Executions Issued.....	3,150
Judgments Collected.....	\$535,943
Orders of Protection Petitions.....	216

#### Probate Court

New Cases Filed.....	178
Cases Closed.....	148
Cases Retired.....	0

#### Traffic Violations

Moving Citations.....	20,324
Parking Violations.....	9,389
Total Fines Collected.....	\$297,792
Nullifications.....	1,792
Nullification Fees Collected.....	\$16,128

### Circuit Court Jury Trial Verdicts

#### Week of July 8

Case	Type	Court	Verdict
94C-1787	Auto Accident	1st	Hung Jury
94C-3299	Auto Accident	2nd (P)	\$3,261
94C-2199	Auto Accident	5th (P)	\$10,528
94C-3651	Auto Accident	5th (P)	\$4,000
94C-3396	Auto Accident	2nd (P)	\$10,000

#### Week of July 15

Case	Type	Court	Verdict
92C-350	Auto Accident	1st	Hung Jury
93C-3688	Personal Injury	6th (P)	\$30,000
91C-3009	Contract	5th	Defendant
95C-1135	Auto Accident	1st	Defendant